

**SPECIAL REPORT: COLOMBIA ON THE BRINK**

# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

October 31, 1999

## SCHOOL TIES



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DOING IN VERMONT?**

**TERRY J. ALLEN INVESTIGATES**

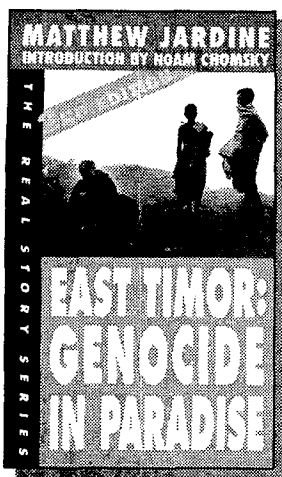


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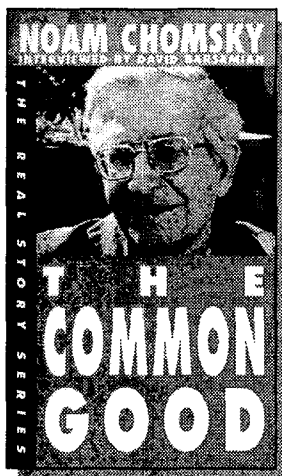


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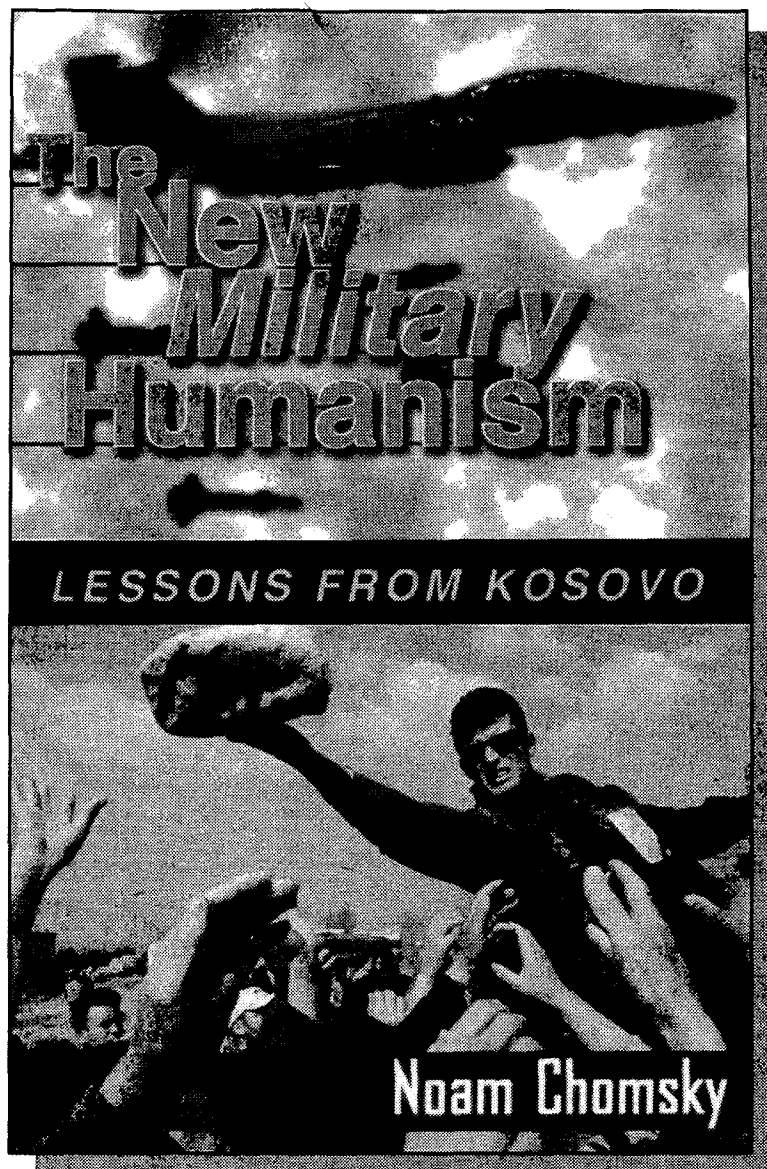


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# Letters

## Cracked Logic

Salim Muwakkil needs to understand the motivation behind mainstream society not wanting poor drug addicts to have children ("Cracked Logic," Sept. 19). It's not racism—it's economics.

As a taxpayer, I do not want to pay for welfare and other services that will be needed to mitigate the problems of a mother's drug abuse. As a human, I am appalled that Muwakkil would support, even indirectly, addicts bringing more children into dysfunctional households. The tone of the article is squarely against using financial incentives to stop these women from having child after child. And it fails to address the social consequences of this reproductive nightmare. I don't want to see white, black, Hispanic or Asian babies born into households where their physical needs will be neglected and their lives put at needless risk as mom squanders the welfare money on drugs.

As a society, we have a duty to care for the less well-off members of our community. But that does not mean we have to tacitly approve or subsidize procreation by the most irresponsible members of our society. If CRACK (Children Requiring a Caring Kommunity) and others want to

pay addicts to be sterilized, and the addicts voluntarily agree to the treatment, I say more power to them. The marketplace can help solve some social problems.

**Hugh Brower**  
Stamford, Conn.

philosophy of the wealthy. Real socialists, particularly Marxists, have always been at the forefront of the struggle for racial justice, and against elitism and eugenics.

**Will Beatty**  
San Francisco

In an otherwise good analysis of the racist attitudes underlying efforts to get drug addicts to undergo sterilization, Salim Muwakkil makes two misleading references to socialism and Marxism.

He links "intellectual elites and political radicals—particularly socialists" to Malthusianism and Social Darwinism. Then, at the end of the article, in a reference to the eugenics movement and "utopians of all kinds," he claims that the "idea of a scientific fix for humanity's problems is at the very heart of Marxist ideology."

Karl Marx strongly opposed and ridiculed Malthus. Friedrich Engels, Marx's lifelong collaborator, wrote a pamphlet, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, specifically to explain the differences between utopian thought and the historical materialism of Marx. And Social Darwinism, far from being "eagerly appropriated" by socialists, was a pseudo-

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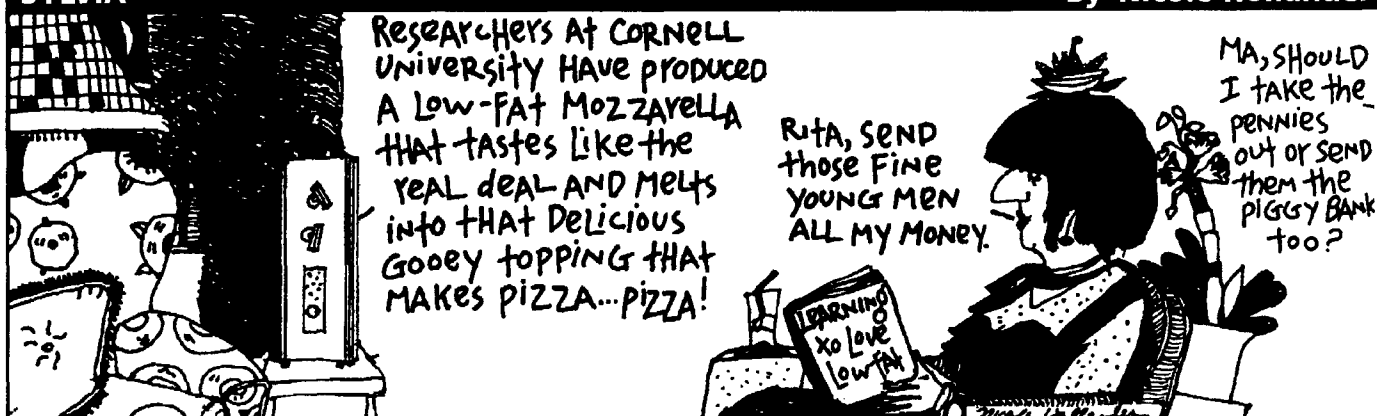
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SYLVIA



By Nicole Hollander

# Take Back the Fourth Estate

**W**hy does an expression of commitment to egalitarian values make one feel like an alien in a land saturated with the rhetoric of free expression and democracy? How is it that a fundamentally unequal system of laissez-faire capitalism has become synonymous with democratic practice? Because we lack the vibrant noncommercial mass media outlets that might routinely expose and challenge the fault lines of capitalism and the consumer culture it has come to require.

For many of us, disgust over concentrated mass media ownership has been palpable since at least 1983, when Ben Bagdikian documented the stranglehold of 50 corporations that then constituted *The Media Monopoly*. We have nodded in horror as each successive edition of his seminal study reported such accelerating consolidation that, by its fifth release in 1997, only 10 corporations controlled "almost everything we see, hear and read."

Still, over the past decade, rampant commercialism brought unanticipated consequences: the phenomena of celebrity scandal-mongering masquerading as news and synergistic cross-marketing of media "brands." Sustainable development initiatives, living wage campaigns, anti-sweatshop actions and organized labor receive scant attention—while breathless accounts of advertising wars, HMO profit margins and cyberbusiness deals dominate the front of the business sections.

Think about it: What chance does a progressive agenda—including such goals as universal health care, family-supporting wages and a brake on global warming—have in the current political climate? How do we get Cokie Roberts and Tim Russert to spend Sunday morning discussing the fact that the average CEO now makes 419 times more than the average blue-collar worker rather than the Clintons' house-hunting trip to New York?

Meanwhile, independent publications teeter constantly on the brink of insolvency. Many fail. Feisty pirate radio stations are silenced. If the Pacifica board of directors can be seduced by Madison Avenue's sampling techniques to run roughshod over thousands of KPFA stalwarts, dare we presume that serious structural change is possible?

Robert McChesney still believes that it is. Frankly, if we hold out any hope for authentic democracy, we should take him at his word and act right away. Everybody complains about the media. McChesney has the audacity and imagination to insist that we might actually do something about it. In his most recent analysis of the media at century's end, Rich

*Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*, McChesney lays out a four-part agenda for media reform that can inspire, orient and help to organize the millions who long for a genuinely democratic fourth estate:

- **Building noncommercial media.** Give your money, time and creativity to strengthen fledgling or foundering efforts. McChesney exhorts foundations, labor organizations and others in the position to channel significant resources to bolster these efforts. Urge Congress to consider tax credits for donations to alternative media makers, such as the Independent Press Association and its dozens of member publications.
- **Genuinely public broadcasting.** Existing national, regional and local citizen organizations should take a leaf from the KPFA battle and advocate for democratic management and local control.

**Everybody complains about the media. McChesney has the imagination to insist that we can do something about it.**

- **Regulation.** The Steal This Radio project of the New York Free Media Alliance has begun to model this tactic. With the help of the Center for Constitutional Rights and the National Lawyers Guild, they have forced the FCC to consider licensing low-power "micro-radio" frequencies.
- **Antitrust action.** McChesney recommends specific new legislation, an antitrust statute directed at breaking up media conglomerates. Lively debates about similar initiatives are well underway in Australia and New Zealand.

Media restructuring, like recent parallel efforts to dismantle the corrupt campaign finance system, will not result organically just from accounts of mainstream media's consistently egregious behavior. Such evidence is necessary and—thanks to the excellent work of FAIR and the Institute for Public Accuracy, among others—available. But Rupert Murdoch, Sumner Redstone and Mickey Mouse will not be embarrassed into democratic transformation.

How do we proceed? McChesney's recommendations are straightforward, but they require self-conscious, dedicated action. Progressive political and community organizations need to adopt them and get to work.

Beth Schulman

# Debt Row

By David Moberg

WASHINGTON

**U**nder pressure from a global grassroots campaign, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have launched an expanded program to reduce the debts of the world's poorest countries. As the two organizations met in late September for their annual meetings, member governments pledged most of the money to get things started. Doubling the scale of the existing program, the move eventually could relieve \$27 billion from "heavily indebted poor countries" (HIPC), and would require the IMF and World Bank to work with the debtor countries on strategies to reduce poverty. The program would still require poor countries to submit to modified IMF "structural adjustment" dictates that typically have made the poor more miserable.

But the Jubilee 2000 movement and its allies want debts of the poorest countries cancelled outright. The new plan is "a step forward," says Seth Amgott, a spokesman for Oxfam, an international anti-poverty group, "but it doesn't go far enough."

The action, which followed a decision last June by the G-7 richest nations to increase their financial contributions to debt relief, implicitly acknowledges the failure of the HIPC initiative started three years ago. Although the IMF claims progress in the HIPCs, a recent study by the Preamble Center, a Washington think tank, concluded that African countries following the IMF mandates have experienced lower economic growth than other developing countries, cut spending on health care, education and sanitation, and suffered from a rising burden of debt. On average, HIPCs spend 30 percent of government revenue on debt payments. Even with the expanded program, a country like Guyana will see its annual debt payments drop only modestly, from \$72 million a year to \$63 million—still an intolerable drain.

The IMF has agreed to fund its share of the new program through a

convoluted plan to revalue a small share of its gold reserves, now valued at less than one-fifth the market price. This scheme also will give the IMF some funding for its controversial structural adjustment lending. But the elaborate revaluation charade also reflects how resolving poor countries' debts is, at one level, a giant accounting shell game.

The 41 HIPCs supposedly owe about \$200 billion to various governments, banks and multilateral institutions. But the market value of that debt is only \$24 billion, according to Jubilee 2000. The poor, who never benefited from the loans often made to corrupt dictators, are left with bills they can never pay. But governments keep "rolling over" and enlarging their debt: Two-thirds of the new debt assumed by sub-Saharan African countries over the past decade simply repay old debt and unpaid interest.

The Clinton administration has asked Congress to appropriate nearly \$1 billion over three years to cancel the poorest countries' debts to the United States and to pay for its own debts to international institutions. A

bill sponsored by House Banking Committee chairman Jim Leach (R-Iowa) would largely ratify the IMF "enhanced HIPC" initiative. It would also require that the United States use the money saved by canceling its loans for human development.

But several other bills—co-sponsored by liberal Democrats and conservative, anti-IMF Republicans—call for outright debt cancellation. These alternative bills would withhold either U.S. approval of IMF gold "sales" or future IMF funding until the international institutions also cancel HIPCs' debts. These strategies are designed not only to cancel debts completely, but also to keep the IMF from imposing its policies on poor countries.

How much would it cost citizens of rich countries to cancel the debts of the 52 poorest countries, freeing that money for initiatives ranging from health care and education to building roads and protecting water resources? About a penny a day per person over the next two decades, according to Jubilee 2000. The payback would be immense, from the moral reward of reduced human misery to the crass prospect of new markets. But canceling debts would take away creditors' power over the policies of developing countries and challenge the twisted mentality of global bankers, the two biggest barriers to elementary justice. ■

Terry LaBan





# A Clean Break

By Steve Ellner

BARCELONA, VENEZUELA

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez may well go down in history as a brilliant tactician. Each time after Chávez threatens his political adversaries, he backs off and announces his willingness to reach a compromise. The opposition generally has reacted by breathing a sigh of relief and accepting the president's olive branch. However, Chávez hasn't lost sight of his goal: the revolutionary transformation of the nation's political system.

Chávez holds the establishment parties responsible for the entrenched privileges and corruption that have characterized Venezuelan democracy since its outset in 1958. Chávez first raised the banner of a new constitution when he staged an unsuccessful coup in February 1992, and again when he won the presidential election last December with 56 percent of the vote (see "Man of the People," March 21). His broadside attacks against the established parties struck a responsive chord, particularly among the underprivileged.

Upon taking office, Chávez decreed elections for a constituent assembly to rewrite the 1961 constitution. On July 25, his "Patriotic Pole" coalition won nearly every seat in the assembly. With an absolute majority, the Chávistas were set on dissolving Congress, a bastion of the traditional political parties. In its first month, the assembly circumscribed the power of the Congress and state legislatures and began firing judges it deemed corrupt.

On Aug. 27, several hundred members of Democratic Action (AD), the largest opposition party, accompanied a group of congress members attempting to hold an emergency session against

the wishes of the Chávistas. Singing their party anthem and chant-ing, "AD is in the streets, and we're not afraid," they clashed with Chávez's followers near the capitol. The U.S. State

was getting down to the business of drafting the new constitution, which is to guide Venezuela into a new era of participatory democracy.

As part of this new tack, Chávez ordered his followers in the assembly to concentrate efforts in the commissions rather than the plenary sessions, where delegates are prone to lofty statements lashing out at the establishment. The delegates are considering several models

of government. Regardless of which is chosen by the assembly and subsequently ratified by the people in a national referendum, they each represent a clean break with the old system of rule by party bosses.

One model would establish a powerful executive branch. Various proposals point in this direction: allowing for the immediate re-election of the president, extending his term from five to six years, creating a vice president or prime minister beholden to the president, and providing the

executive branch with a veritable majority on the national council in charge of supervising elections.

Strengthening the presidency is a reaction to the preponderance of bureaucratically run parties that have been unresponsive to the needs of the people. Chávez's frank style and direct contact with the people, as well as his frequent and lengthy television appearances, lends credibility to the presidential model. "Venezuela has never had a president like this," says Alejandro Silva, a pro-Chávez assembly delegate. "People now go to Miraflores [the presidential palace], and although they don't always get a chance to see Chávez, their grievances are recorded. And what most impresses them is that there is a follow-up. One of the president's men actually gets back to them."

A second model, underpinned by the concept of popular sovereignty would allow the people to elect and remove judges, the attorney general and other figures whose job is to combat corrup-



BERTRAND PARRÉS/AP

President Hugo Chávez addresses the constituent assembly.

Department, having refrained from criticizing Chávez since his election, warned of grave threats to the separation of powers in Venezuela.

Chávez eventually backed off. In early September, he advised his followers in the constituent assembly to negotiate with Congress. In doing so, the assembly agreed to recognize congressional powers and to refrain from removing governors and mayors accused of corruption. In late September, Chávez met with President Clinton in New York and spoke at the United Nations and the Organization of American States, where he talked of "national consensus," a term indicative of his turn to moderation.

A number of hard-liners in the constituent assembly—including ex-military rebels who had supported Chávez in a second coup attempt in November 1992—criticized the president's turnabout. Chávez responded that, given the recent electoral blows received by the establishment parties, further attacks were superfluous. What was important

tion and defend human rights. A consensus exists among delegates in favor of instituting popular referenda, not only to decide matters of prime importance, but to recall elected officials. "Under the old democracy, 10 or 15 city councilmen or state legislators forced a mayor or governor out of office," says Luis Diaz, a top leader of Chávez's Fifth Republic Party. "It's the people who should have the final word."

A third model, which is supported, at least in theory, by the parties of the ruling coalition, would transfer power from the central and state governments to the municipal level. "It isn't practical to hold elections for everyone and everything," says Nelson Rampersad, a leading member of the pro-Chávez Movement Toward Socialism Party. "Decentralization has to reach the localities where civil society constantly interacts with the state." He notes, for example, that Supreme Court judges should be selected on the basis of merit by a national coun-

cil chosen by university law schools and lawyers associations, rather than be elected or named by the parties.

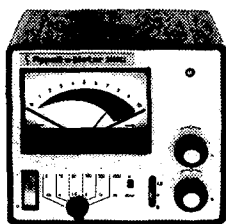
Many sectors of the population are prodding the assembly to incorporate rights and benefits for them in the new constitution. Street peddlers and other members of the "informal economy," for instance, have gathered in front of the capitol, calling for their inclusion in social security and other worker programs. Similarly, the Indian population, which chose three assembly delegates in special elections, is pushing for official recognition of their native languages and dual citizenship for those who live on the Colombian or Brazilian borders.

Mobilization and participation is, in theory, what Chávez's brand of democracy is all about. But the expectations and demands set in motion by Chávez's movement are a double-edged sword. The real danger is that the relatively weak parties that back Chávez will not be able to contain the tremendous pressure

unleashed from below. The resultant political convulsions could lead in any number of undesirable directions.

Chávez's charisma is what enabled him to displace the old rule. But the president is in a race against time. A new political system must be created and rules laid down before the opposition regroup or Chávez's appeal wears thin. In addition, the Venezuelan economy has been victimized by its uncertain future, which has scared off private investment. In the face of these imperatives, Chávez is pressuring for the ratification of the new constitution before the year is out. If all goes according to plan, Venezuelans will greet the new millennium with a clean break from the past in the form of a novel democracy. ■

**Steve Ellner** is co-editor of *The Latin American Left: From the Fall of Allende to Perestroika* (Westview) and three books on Venezuelan history and politics.



# Appall-o-Meter

By David Futrelle

## Sick Room 8.8

In the United States, we're troubled, and rightly so, when overly thrifty HMOs send us home early from the hospital. In Iran, cash-strapped patients face a different sort of problem: The government-run Sina hospital in Tehran plunks those unable to pay their bills into a jail cell. "To make sure patients will fulfill their financial obligations, we began detaining patients who fail to pay several months ago," the hospital director told the *Aftab-e Emrouz* newspaper. "We had no other choice. We have to pay our staff and had to assign a room for this purpose." So far, *Reuters* reports, the hospital has been detaining some two dozen patients a month—and has had to readmit several to the hospital after they sustained injuries trying to escape.

## English™ 6.1

In a continuing effort to claim portions of the English language as its own private

property, America Online is taking legal action against the author of a self-published Internet dating guide for using the phrase "You've Got Male" as her title—a reference to "You've Got Mail," the AOL-popularized catch phrase. "When we see our trademark being used, we take action," an AOL lawyer told the press. "We believe when people hear that phrase, they think of AOL." The company has sent a cease and desist letter to the author, Madeleine Sabol.

## True Colors 7.6

Be true to your school—or else! Eric Nutter, a fifth grader at Western Reserve Middle School in Collins, Ohio, discovered that wearing the wrong colors at school can be dangerous. Not because of any internecine gang warfare, but because he happened to wear the colors of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Nutter found himself singled out by his teacher—and was forced to sit in a corner of the class-

room—for wearing his Steelers sweatshirt on a school "spirit day" devoted to the Cleveland Browns. Nutter and his parents "expected some disapproval from his classmates, but figured it would stop short of school-enforced humiliation," reports the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "Only when the straight-A student put on



a Cleveland Indians shirt he'd brought for gym class was he permitted to turn his desk around." The school has since apologized to Nutter and his parents, though not to the Steelers.

TERRY LABAN



# No Mercy

**E**d Garcia buried his 68-year-old father the week before Labor Day. His name was Jose Garcia. He suffered from chronic heart trouble, had been confined to a wheelchair for nearly a decade, and finally succumbed to a massive heart attack the morning of Aug. 22 in New York's Green Haven prison.

A Cuban immigrant who came to this country in the '50s, Jose was married to the same woman for 41 years. He had worked for most of his life as a banquet waiter at some of New York's most prestigious hotels, and sacrificed throughout all those years so he could put his son and daughter through Catholic schools and assure them a college education. "He was a fantastic father, looking after us constantly," recalls Ed, 38, who works as a Wall Street broker these days.

Ed says his father taught the family to always obey the law. But a decade ago, already sick and disabled, Jose made a foolish mistake. The crack epidemic was at its height then, with so much fast money chasing the next big high that some corners of Washington Heights mushroomed into round-the-clock drug bazaars. Jose became a lookout for a drug gang on his block. Cops busted the operation in 1989.

Prosecutors knew it was Jose's first brush with the law, and that the then 58-year-old was already very sick. So they offered him a lower charge and a four-year sentence. All he had to do was testify against the other gang members. But gang leaders sent word that if he did, they'd go after his family. Jose refused the plea and was convicted of a drug felony.

Under New York's draconian Rockefeller drug laws, he faced a mandatory 15-year-to-life sentence, something nobody involved in the case thought he deserved. "It was never the people's contention that he was the brains, or mastermind of the operation, or the head of the organization," prosecutor Arlette Hernes told the court at the time in an unusual request for leniency.

"I think it is sad," Judge Leslie Crocker Snyder, one of the city's toughest judges, told Jose. "You were not a major figure here. ... Unfortunately, I have no choice as to what the sentence will be, because I certainly would have been happy to impose a lesser sentence. In your case,



I can only hope your health won't suffer too much."

Should you think Jose's case is unusual, consider this: Of the 20,266 drug offenders sent to federal prison under federal mandatory sentencing guidelines in fiscal year 1998, only 41 were convicted as drug kingpins. Two-thirds were minor offenders, convicted of the lowest charges under federal drug laws, which carry a minimum sentence of five to 40 years.

After his conviction, Jose was immediately shipped upstate to Green Haven's unit for the physically disabled, where he ended up in a wheelchair. His wife, Hilda, his children and his grandchildren continued to visit him regularly. The whole family eventually enlisted in the growing grassroots movement to reform mandatory sentencing laws for drugs. "It tore my family up," Ed says. "A man who had done so much for us spending his last years this way."

In 1994, the family asked New York state Sen. Olga Mendez to appeal to the governor for a medical parole. In the appeal, Mendez warned, "Jose is suffering from a debilitating heart condition, which coupled with his advanced years may have tragic results." Later that year, an aide to

then Gov. Mario Cuomo responded that Garcia's application was under consideration.

But Republican George Pataki replaced the liberal Cuomo in 1995, and several years passed without a decision from the new administration. Finally, on July 21, 1998, James Murray, the director of the governor's Executive Clemency Bureau, wrote to the Garcia family that there was "insufficient basis to warrant the exercise of the governor's clemency powers."

By then, press reports had exposed how the Parole Board under Pataki had granted freedom to 1,277 felons, including 158 imprisoned for the same serious drug charge as Garcia's. Among those freed were two Israeli mobsters, Ziv Oved and Moshe Cohen, who were convicted of running multimillion-dollar, international drug rings. Both were released and deported to Israel after a Brooklyn businessman, who was also a friend and big fundraiser for Pataki, appealed to the Parole Board. One of the convicts had served only six years of an 18-year-to-life sentence.

## Gov. Pataki's Parole Board freed more than 1,000 felons. But Jose Garcia had no campaign contributors in his corner.

Another man, John Kim, who was convicted of three armed robberies in Queens, was released after a second Pataki fundraiser interceded on his behalf. But Jose had no campaign contributors in his corner.

Ed talked to his father by telephone on Aug. 21. They discussed the usual things sons and fathers talk about: the New York Mets' run at the baseball pennant, politics, the family. At around 7:30 the next morning, a guard making the rounds at Green Haven noticed Jose lying on the floor of his cell. One of the oldest Rockefeller law inmates in New York had completed his maximum sentence. ■

# Colombia on the Brink

By Ana Carrigan

**O**n Sept. 26, two news stories from Colombia precisely reflected the edgy, roller-coaster quality that has characterized the Colombian peace process from the start. In the first, the Colombian government and the leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas announced the long-delayed opening of peace negotiations, stalled since mid-July. In the second, U.S. Ambassador Curtis Kamman formally announced in Bogotá that U.S. military aid would be forthcoming for the Colombian army to bolster its fight against drugs and the guerrilla insurgency.

On the one hand, for the first time since the counterinsurgency in Colombia began more than 40 years ago, the two sides have agreed to open formal negotiations covering the full spectrum of the political, economic and social causes of the war. This agreement was achieved at zero hour. Since the breakdown of talks last July, paramilitary violence and the secret, dirty war of selective assassinations targeting prominent Colombian intellectuals and human rights defenders has intensified. The momentum toward a full-scale civil war has been gathering critical speed.

On the other hand, Kamman's announcement confirms that, for all the fine words about support for the peace process, the only help Colombia will get from this administration is an intensification of Washington's failed drug eradication program. Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey's determination to "wipe out drug production at the source" has finally succeeded in erasing the line between the U.S. drug war and the internal Colombian insurgency. The new aid will include vastly expanded military aid for the Colombian army to fight the FARC "narco-guerrillas." McCaffrey's crop-spraying program also will be bolstered by a new 950-man, U.S.-trained counter-narcotics battalion, scheduled to go into operation against peasants growing coca under guerrilla protection. These poor farmers cultivate drug crops to feed their families.

Perhaps it was always naïve to believe that the Clinton administration would provide the same support and leadership for peace in Colombia that it has in far-away countries like Ireland and Israel with powerful U.S. lobbies. The brutal fact is that no one in Washington cares enough to commit the kind of resources Colombian President Andres Pastrana requires to support his imaginative and courageous commitment to a political solution of the country's tangled web of interrelated crises. Unwilling to confront McCaffrey and the Republican congressional leadership—who have always opposed the peace process as an obstacle to the drug war—Clinton gave President Pastrana's peace efforts half-hearted support for about six months. Now, behind closed doors without any public

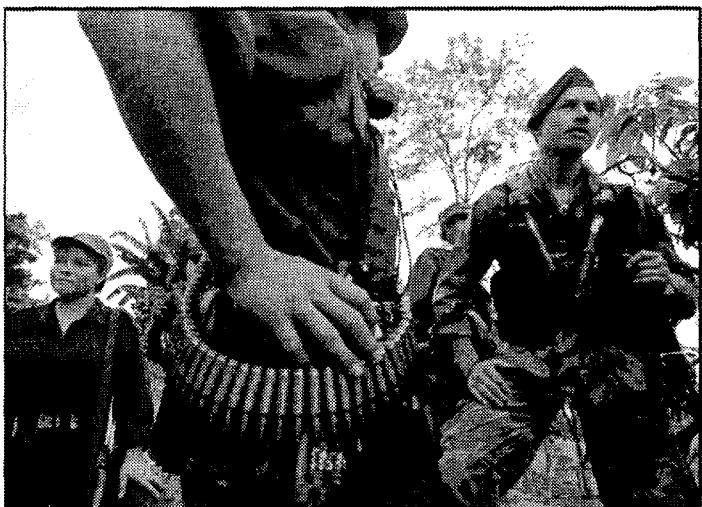
debate, the decision has been made to go the military route.

U.S. aid is anticipated to be in the neighborhood of \$500 million a year for the next three years. While there still may be time to resist being sucked into yet another tragic, unnecessary Latin American quagmire, it is urgent that those who will sign off on this policy take a hard, cold, honest look at what is involved.

**T**he roots of the war and of Colombia's narco-trafficking are the same: poverty, neglect, exclusion and impunity. Guns and helicopters will never stop drugs. And spraying chemicals will not stop hungry peasants from growing coca. Since 1985, nearly 500,000 acres have been fumigated. The environmental damage, of course, has been incalculable. But the Colombian drug crop has expanded to almost 300,000 acres of coca and 7,000 acres of poppies.

In fairness, no one familiar with the situation in Colombia would deny that the Colombian government needs an honorable, modern, professional army to defend and protect its institutions, and to guarantee the security of all of its citizens from the violent forces conspiring against it—be they guerrillas, narco-traffickers or paramilitaries.

But denials to the contrary, Washington policymakers know well that the Colombian army is light years away from

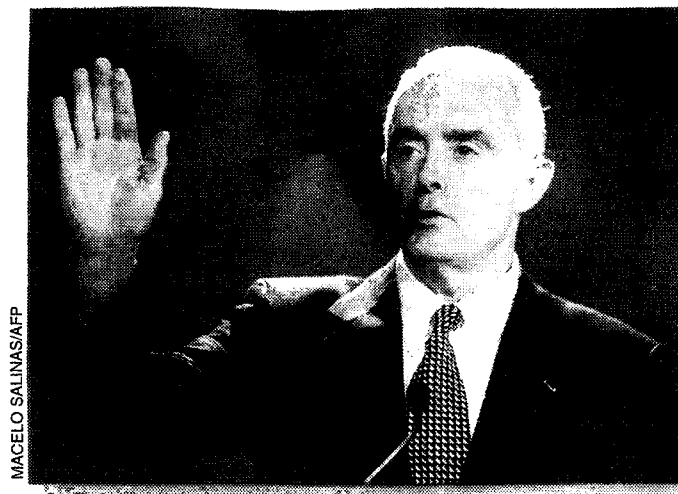


MACELO SALINAS/AFP

The new U.S. aid package will include vastly expanded military aid to fight "narco-guerrillas" like these rebels from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).



attaining those standards. By now, a reliable army would have devised and implemented a concrete plan for dismantling the drug-trafficking paramilitaries and arresting their leaders. The high command also would have purged the right-wing extremists within their own ranks, who those closest to the scene say still run the dirty war from within military intelligence. This is not to say the



army does not have the capacity to reform—but reforms take time. Claims circulating in Washington that the army has cleaned up its act and become a law-abiding, human-rights-respecting force are just untrue.

The Colombian army's atrocious history of human rights abuse and corruption over the past two decades cannot be solved, as American officials would have us believe, by firing two or three generals. In spite of the best and most courageous efforts of the Pastrana government—in collaboration with intense pressure from the State Department—and new and honest leadership at the very top of the military, far too many powerful senior figures retain intimate links to corruption and extreme right-wing death squads.

Before Washington lawmakers extinguish the Colombia peace process and launch the United States into the middle of a bloody and messy civil war, there are questions that need asking. For starters, what precisely is the U.S. objective?

If, as per McCaffrey, the goal is to cut off the flow of Colombian cocaine and heroin, then why is all the effort and investment directed exclusively to fighting poor peasant farmers in the south who grow drug crops under the protection of the guerrillas? Why is there no similar plan to attack the paramilitaries, which, according to the DEA, are far more heavily involved in processing, trafficking and shipping drugs out of their fiefdoms in the north?

Or is the objective, as the Clinton administration claims, to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Colombia? Because if that is the goal, then the administration needs to use its leverage with the army to insist on a program of serious, systematic reforms before granting hundreds of millions of dollars for lethal new weapons. Claims that the army has severed links to the paramilitaries open the way for the creation of an elite counter-paramilitary battalion. Trained and equipped by Washington, with sole responsibility for dismantling the paramilitaries, such a force would transform relations with the population by returning authority and legitimacy to the army.

The core of Pastrana's peace strategy, which originated with leaders of the FARC, consists of ending the insurgency while simultaneously ending coca production in the guerrilla-controlled territories. The guerrillas even sent delegates to Washington to bring their proposal to the attention of the administration almost two years ago—long before

**If U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey's goal is to cut off the flow of cocaine and heroin, why is it all the effort directed against poor farmers?**

Pastrana's election. It's a very straightforward plan: manual eradication of drug plants in return for massive infrastructure, alternative crop development and access to markets. The price tag? Around \$1 billion a year for five

years. In fact, the FARC and the Colombian government are already collaborating in a \$10 million pilot plan with the U.N. Drug Control Program. Pastrana is not alone in his conviction that the precondition to solving the drug problem in Colombia is to deal with the insurgency first. Only the United States believes the opposite.

Current U.S. plans risk providing a tragic and bitter ending to years of dangerous, dedicated efforts to persuade Colombia's entrenched opponents to start talking to each other. For there must not be any mistaken ideas about the consequences for Colombia if U.S. military assistance—without a counter-paramilitary policy—tips Colombia over the edge into full-scale civil war. Once unleashed, that war will lead to a humanitarian disaster on a scale not yet seen on this continent.

Forget the Central American wars, dreadful and destructive though they were. Colombia is *sui generis*. The El Salvador war was fought in a country of 8,000 square miles with a population of 5 million. It lasted for 12 years and cost 80,000 lives and \$5 billion to support a 62,000-man army. Imagine the cost, in lives and money, of a war fought in Colombia—a country of 440,000 square miles with a population of 40 million, several large urban centers teeming with militias, three mountain ranges slicing from north to south, a large Amazon jungle in which only the guerrillas know how to survive, and an army forecast to become three times the size of El Salvador's.

When Colombia's cities and landscape have been scorched and the 1.5 million internally displaced people (already more than those driven from Kosovo) have multiplied many times over; when Colombian refugees and their pursuers spill across the borders into neighboring countries, bringing violence and destabilization to the impoverished and fragile democracies of Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela and Panama; And when finally the war moves away, following the international drug trade as the traffickers shift their production centers south into Brazil or north into Panama, in eternal pursuit of the U.S. cocaine market: Who will calculate the cost of Colombia's destruction then? ■

Ana Carrigan is the author of *The Palace of Justice, a Colombian Tragedy (Four Walls Eight Windows)* and is writing a new book of Colombian memoirs for Seven Stories Press.

# Plight of the *Desplazados*

By Nick Rosen

BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

**D**espite a disturbing silence in the chambers of international concern, Colombia is now home to the most grave humanitarian crisis in the Western Hemisphere. As the Colombian military, rebel guerrillas and paramilitary groups struggle for military and political control, unarmed citizens have become the principal target of a demented strategy either to win the partisanship of poor, rural communities of Colombia or wipe them out altogether.

The "invisible" multitudes of displaced people swelling the dirty metropolitan barrios have grown desperate to grab the attention of Colombia and the world, and public offices in Bogotá have been peacefully occupied on several occasions. An August protest at the Bogotá office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) showed the desperation of the *desplazados* like no other. Two of the protesters carefully nailed their palms to crosses in the front yard and a handful of men stitched their mouths shut. Muttering through the green string, Arnolfo Antonio Hincapie claimed that they "must go to extremes to make the government keep its promise."

Hincapie, a tailor from the Caquetá region, was forced to mend the rebels' uniforms after they took control of the jungle town where he lived. When the paramilitaries arrived, they shot him for "collaborating" with the guerrillas. The bullet entered his left side and came out the other, rupturing his large intestine. Still bleeding, Hincapie fled with dozens of his neighbors and journeyed hundreds of miles to Bogotá in hopes of finding work and assistance from the government.

Since he was wounded, Hincapie has been forced to wear a colostomy bag at all times. Despite his constant pleas to the government, he says he hasn't received medical attention for the past six months. "They won't even give me money for a new bag," Hincapie says. "I had to beg for money at the traffic lights to buy this one."

The bags are meant to be replaced every five days, but the displaced tailor has been wearing the same plastic bag around his waist for a month. "It's starting to burn," he says.

**M**ore than 1.5 million Colombians have been displaced since 1984. Now, 532 Colombians are displaced by violence every day—more than half of them children. Nearly all the *desplazados* are from poor, rural areas. The majority end up in the bustling urban centers of Colombia, where they meld into the ghettos at the margins of the city. Most are forced to the edges of the economy, selling flowers and cigarettes on the streets and adding to the statistics of crime and unemployment.

The United Nations and international relief agencies are fully aware of the crisis. The UNHCR set up a Bogotá office in 1998, and field offices are popping up around Colombia. But as refugees in their own country, the Colombian *desplazados* are unprotected under the 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention, and UNHCR largely plays an advisory role here. The lion's share of the responsibility

lies with the Colombian government, which has been incapable of managing the crisis.

A 1996 study by the Colombian non-governmental organization CODHES found that only around 60 percent of the displaced receive any form of humanitarian assistance, usually from relief agencies, not the government. "The appropriate laws are in place," says Father Santi Servillín, a member of the Colombian Episcopal Conference, which produced the first major study on displacement in 1994. "Unfortunately, the government has not even come close to fulfilling its obligations under those laws."

In 1997, with the number of internally displaced persons in the country already nearing 1 million, the state finally recognized the problem with an ambitious string of presidential orders that promised emergency assistance, protection and

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## NATO Tango

By Travis Lea

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

**T**he renewed U.S. interest in Colombia's civil war has made the country's neighbors suspicious of Washington's motives. In the wake of the Kosovo conflict, South American leaders are wondering if the next international military intervention might take place in their own backyard. At the same time, now that U.S. troops are pulling out of Panama, the military may be looking for a new strategic partner in the hemisphere. Their most likely ally: Argentina.

Argentina is already the only country in Latin America that is an associate member of NATO (the others in the world are Australia, New Zealand, Israel and Egypt). President Carlos Menem gladly sent 250 soldiers to Kosovo in June, and offered to send double that amount. Ever since the Balkan bombing ended, Argentina has been practically begging for full NATO membership, to the dismay of all its neighbors.

In July, Menem's request to become a full NATO member was denied. But the rejection may only make Argentina more eager to please the United States, in keeping with Menem's policy toward Washington. At the behest of the United States, Argentina participated in American interventions in Iraq and more recently was part of the U.N. force in East Timor. The two countries occasionally perform joint military exercises.

Menem made clear his country's support for U.S. initiatives in Colombia, when U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey came to Buenos Aires in late August to discuss "regional strategic affairs." Menem offered political and military support to the United States, and dissuaded McCaffrey from pursuing a negotiated peace agreement in favor of forceful intervention—just what Clinton's envoy wanted to hear.

Menem will leave office in December after 10 years in power. One of the cornerstones of his presidency has been a strengthening of economic and political relations with the developed world. Argentina, which boasts one of the strongest economies in the region, has become popular with the International Monetary Fund and Wall



long-term resettlement efforts. But the public coffers have been drained by war, corruption and the worst recession in 60 years, and most observers agree that the \$28 million the government has mustered this year to assist the displaced amounts to a squirt gun against a raging fire. It's certainly a small figure compared Colombia's \$5 billion annual military budget.

The number of people recognized by the government as currently displaced by violence is little more than half the figure estimated by NGOs. Hundreds of thousands of *desplazados* are seen merely as unfortunate paupers, not victims of violent political persecution, and thus ineligible for any form of assistance under the law. "The Colombian government does not want to face up to such alarming statistics, because to do so would require the dedication of even more resources," says Diana Sanchez Lara of CODHES.

Perhaps Colombia's biggest problem is the military's continuing failure to confront the right-wing paramilitaries, who commit the majority of war crimes and forced displacements. Numerous human rights reports and criminal investigations have revealed a close working relationship between the military and right-wing militias, which often are

allowed to carry out their illegal operations thanks to the deliberate ignorance—and in some cases direct participation—of the state. Over the past few months, these groups have stepped up their bloody campaigns to unprecedented levels of terror around the country.

Although the Clinton administration has expressed its concern about human rights violations in Colombia, the "paramilitary problem" isn't getting in the way of U.S. military aid. This year, Colombia received \$289 million in anti-drug money from the United States. In comparison, the United States has dedicated only \$2 million for Colombia's internal refugees. Congress is now courting a proposal for \$1.5 billion in new aid to Colombia, most of which would be dedicated to military counternarcotics operations. While it remains unclear how much—if any—of this money would be used to address the refugee crisis, one thing is clear: As the United States steps up involvement in the Colombian war, the chances of success for President Andres Pastrana's peace negotiations grow ever weaker. If the United States continues to distance itself from the peace process—the best hope of resolving the refugee crisis—and embraces all-out war, more and more Colombians will be forced to flee. ■

Argentine President Carlos Menem has made clear his support for U.S. initiatives in Colombia, promising political and military support.

KEVIN LAMARQUE/REUTERS



Street for its fiscal policies that favor foreign investment. "Instead of playing the loser and playing with the poor of the world," says Thomas Scheetz, an American professor and military analyst who has lived in Argentina for the past 15 years. "It was decided that they ought to play with the powerful of the world and then become part of it."

Looking to preserve its alliance with Argentina, during his visit McCaffrey also met with the country's two main presidential contenders: Eduardo Duhalde of the ruling Peronist Party and Buenos Aires Mayor Fernando De La Rúa, the likely winner. Argentina's relationship to the United States is always a campaign issue, but neither candidate has endorsed U.S. intervention in Colombia as eagerly as Menem.

As the United States gropes about for a strategic partner for some possible intervention in Colombia, Argentina's alignment with the United States on military issues is making many others in the region nervous. The countries that border Colombia do not want to intervene there, and deny the U.S. claim that the conflict in Colombia is principally a drug war. "If at some point there was a need to intervene with an international peacekeeping force in Colombia, would it

be the United Nations or the Organization of American States?" asks Rosendo Fraga, director of the Union for a New Majority, a local think tank for regional military affairs. "What's the standard? Can NATO play a role or not? These are debates that we now have to face after Kosovo, and for now, there are not any clear answers."

While Argentina has promised to send troops to Colombia if requested by the United States, Brazil, Peru and other South American countries have been stepping up talks on creating regional military alliances to counterbalance the power of NATO as a global gendarme. When Washington tested the waters for military cooperation with Brazil, President Rafael Cardoso said he opposed outside intervention in Colombia. A week later, he backpedaled, saying he'd rather see South American troops come to help than a force led by Washington.

Fernando Román of the human rights group HIJOS cautions that the United States already has a bad track record. "With the same pretext they used to finance their dirty war in Nicaragua," he says, "they're going to create a new Vietnam, claiming they're going to fight narco-trafficking."

The American public may or may not believe the United States has national security concerns in Colombia. But if Washington plans to increase its involvement, it's going to have to do a lot more work to convince this half of the Americas. ■

# Murder Inc.

By Steven Dudley

BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

A skinny, bearded man approaches me as I walk through the dimly lit brick streets of Bogotá's Candelaria district. He stutters for a moment before asking me for *una moneda*, a little spare change. A dark blue baseball cap covered with grease and sweat stains sits lightly on his head, and the wrinkles on his face are dark with dirt. Before I hand over a few cents, I ask him if the neighborhood is dangerous. "No," he confides before taking my money. "It used to be a lot worse."

The Candelaria forms part of the historic section of Bogotá and is the first beneficiary of the city's \$1 billion plan to clean up its center. Partially funded by the U.N. Development Program, the plan includes renovating historic buildings, unearthing a river and creating spaces for open markets and walkways. It even has been counseled by the director of New York's Business Improvement Districts, which renovated the Times Square area.

In the Candelaria, two main avenues have been repaved with brick and covered with a fresh coat of paint. Security has been tightened, especially on the weekends when the tourists frequent the Spanish colonial-style houses that dot the hillside. "The thieves no longer come here," the man on the street tells me, "because they know that if they do the police will kill them."

Renovating the center is part of Mayor Enrique Peñalosa's attempt to rebuild the city's image. But the city's efforts to rescue this overrun and dangerous area are running into stiff resistance from homeless residents, guerrilla groups and the drug- and gun-runners in the area. Supporters of the renovation project have reacted to this resistance by murdering groups of indigents to clear the way for the city's plan. Some have characterized this horrible affliction in Colombian society as "social cleansing."

Despite the consequences, the mayor's urban renovation office is pushing ahead with the project, which stretches down the hill through other historic districts, including nearby neighborhoods such as Santa Ines, San Bernardo and San Victorino. San Victorino, where the river will be revived, is a run-down marketplace that harbors one of Bogotá's noisiest east-west streets. San Bernardo has few historic landmarks left and sits just north of Las Cruces, one of the most feared neighborhoods in Bogotá.

Las Cruces is the focus of guerrilla activity in the city. A small contingent of dissident rebels—who broke away after their leaders signed a peace accord with the government in the early '90s—now controls the flow of guns through this district. According to sociologist Hernando Gomez of Bogotá's Javeriana University, the Revolutionary Armed

Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels also have a small group operating in the area. The battles for internal control of these groups are as fierce as their fights for territory. Gomez says he has witnessed leaders compete for power by seeing who can stick a knife further into his own belly.

Some say that the government will have to talk with all the guerrillas in the area to proceed with its project. "At some point, we are going to have to negotiate with the forces of power in the zone: the police, the guerrillas, the gun-runners," says Cesar Junca, a spokesman for the renovation program. "But this will be difficult because these are people who don't negotiate with anyone."

The dissident rebels have not showed that they want to take part in a dialogue. But Gomez says the FARC, who are in peace negotiations with the government, will probably put the Bogotá renovation project on the agenda. However, talks have stalled recently and the mayor's office doesn't have the authority to negotiate independently with the dissidents, leaving both processes in a lurch. The interim period has only heightened tensions between the sides, especially in neighborhoods like Santa Ines.



The local guards call the police *marios*, slang for the hit men who are responsible for Bogotá's "social cleansing"

More commonly known as the Cartucho, Santa Ines is the center of homelessness in Bogotá and the most notorious area slated for renovation. Despite being located just a few yards from the city's main police station and





Death squads organized and funded by local businessmen and operated by the police have re-established themselves since the urban renovation program began to take shape a couple of years ago.

Junca says that social cleansing is also on the rise: Death squads organized and funded by local businessmen and operated by the police have re-established themselves since the urban renovation program began to take shape a couple of years ago. Figures are difficult to obtain, but Junca says it resembles the late '80s and early '90s, when the phenomenon first emerged in Colombia. Between 1988 and 1993, the non-governmental Center for Research and Popular Education documented 1,926 cases of social cleansing throughout the country. Most of the victims were males between the ages of 16 and 26 and were described as delinquents by their self-professed killers. According to Gomez,

the killing slowed through the mid-'90s, but it has picked up again, particularly this year.

The focus of the social cleansing now seems to be on the prostitutes working in the city's center. Along 14th Avenue just north of the Cartucho, the women swing from lamp posts and hang out windows. Some smile at the cars that pass, others wince. Women working at the brothels that sit to the north and south of the Cartucho say that more than 100 prostitutes have disappeared or been killed in the past few months. Junca says that number sounds accurate.

Police spokesman Herbin Hoyos says he has only five registered deaths of prostitutes, the result of the "hazards of the job." "It is a risky job because they are in contact with high-risk people like drug addicts and alcoholics," he explains, claiming that "social cleansing" does not exist in Bogotá.

**P**olicemen also monitor us as we walk through the Cartucho. The local guards call them *marios*, slang for the hit men who are responsible for the area's "social cleansing." Gomez says the hit men ride in pairs on motorcycles or in pickup trucks, firing their automatic weapons at groups of indigents. Junca says he sees the groups gathering in a police parking lot from his window in the early evenings some weekends. "Social cleansing is not the result of some isolated incidents," Junca explains. "It is the result of an institutionalized policy."

The mayor's project is moving forward. Offers are being made to buy up the remaining land and buildings, and the city has given some local vendors and homeless people money to find new places to live and work. Others remain in areas like the Cartucho, despite death threats. It's unclear how the planned park and river projects will look when they are finished. But many more people will probably die during the construction. ■

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Colombia's presidential palace, the area—home to approximately 4,000 people—is a study in neglect.

Most residents recycle cardboard for a living, exchanging it with larger private collectors for money or *basuco*—the pasty residue left from coca processing laboratories—and then sleep wherever they land. The police stroll through the Cartucho and watch the small circles of indigents inhaling the deadly smoke that is as addictive as crack cocaine.

Entire families hide behind their recycling push-carts and underneath tarps when we pass. Others approach us aggressively with sticks and smiles. The leaders slide out in front of us to ask Gomez, our guide, what we're doing. The head *comanche* doesn't remember the last group of "Christians" to pass through this area, but recognizes Gomez, who has been working in the city's streets for 14 years. He lets us by without any problems. The local Cartucho guards, however, keep watch. After each block, a new one picks us up, walks slightly behind us and yells out our coordinates. Occasionally, one yells from a roof.

It's up to the mayor's urban renovation office to methodically calculate the social and economic costs of its project in areas like Santa Ines. It even has accomplished what no one has been able to do since the Cartucho emerged in the '80s: It took a census. The results include data on work, income and housing. But in the Cartucho, the survey is considered a hit list. "There are many who think the census is just a means by which the police can find out where they live and pick them off," Junca explains.

Many of the residents do have serious problems with the law. Gomez estimates there may be as many as a hundred who are wanted for multiple homicides. But Junca admits that the renovation project has little control over the police. In mid-September, police attacked a known drug den. Seven people reportedly died, including two policemen. The attack was not the first in the area. Since the renovation project began, a police spokesman says, conflicts between the police and local gangs have increased. Territorial disputes have also spilled over into other areas as rival gangs are forced to move their operations.

# SCHOOL TIES



## WHAT ARE INDONESIA'S SPECIAL FORCES DOING IN VERMONT?

BY TERRY J. ALLEN  
NORTHFIELD, VERMONT

**Q**uietly tucked away in the Vermont hills, the only private military college in the country has been educating and training current and future members of the Indonesian army. During homecoming week at Norwich University, parents strolled the bucolic campus, crimson leaves glistening in the bright fall sunshine. A world away, that same hue ran in the streets of East Timor.

The Norwich program, which includes both undergraduate and graduate military training, was arranged in 1997 by high-ranking Indonesian military officers suspected of committing crimes against humanity in East Timor. One general was head of Indonesia's repressive intelligence apparatus; the other gave the shoot-to-kill order in a 1989 massacre and has publicly supported the creation of civilian militias in Indonesia.

In 1997, 12 Indonesian undergraduates and 10 graduate students entered Norwich. They were selected "by the Indonesian Embassy in Washington" and paid for "with funds wired by order of the military attaché," says Thomas Greene, director of public relations at Norwich. The Indonesians presented a list of students; Norwich accepted all of them. At least 11 of them listed the same billing address: the headquarters of Kopassus, Indonesia's notorious special forces.

Ostensibly civilians, the undergrads who enrolled in the 4-year, ROTC-linked "corps of cadets" program are obligated to serve six years in the Indonesian military after graduation. Most of the Indonesian graduate students—active-duty officers in the Indonesian army, with ranks from first lieutenant

to major—graduated last spring with master's degrees in military science and diplomacy and returned home. At least four went to East Timor.

By Sept. 10, at the height of the slaughter in East Timor, as many as 25,000 Indonesian soldiers and police officers were stationed in the territory, which had a population of 800,000. According to the United Nations, at least 7,000 East Timorese died and 400,000 were displaced before the Australian-led peacekeeping force landed in mid-September; a handful of police, military or militia soldiers was killed.

The university claims that its former students were "serving under the United Nations flag." "I do not even imagine what they were talking about," responds Manuel de Almeida e Silva, a U.N. spokesman. "There is no room for confusion: No Indonesian troops served under the U.N. flag."

**W**hy Norwich? For the Indonesian military, training in America is a priority. "It is a sign of legitimacy, and for Indonesian officers, it enhances their prestige, and gives them extra clout," says journalist Allan Nairn, a long-time critic of Jakarta, who was recently deported after entering East Timor to cover the atrocities. "They want and need U.S. connections."

Richard Hansen, senior vice president of Norwich, agrees that the U.S. connection is important to the school's foreign students. "They are going to get to know future U.S. generals, perhaps, and so will Americans get to know them. In the long run, the relationships will be important."

PHOTO: NORWICH UNIV.



For Norwich, which has been training foreigners since the 19th century, the partnership represents a commitment to spreading U.S. values. It is also profitable. The school's 90-percent acceptance rate is evidence of its small pool of potential applicants, who are attracted by an aggressive recruitment program. At about \$20,000 per student, the small university with 1,600 students at the Northfield campus has reaped hundreds of thousands of dollars from its arrangement with Indonesia.

University President Richard W. Schneider says he was unaware that 11 of the 13 Indonesian undergraduates enrolled at Norwich this year list the same billing address for their tuition: Makopassus Citanjung, Jakarta, the headquarters of Kopassus. This elite unit—which for years has been accused of torture and conducting covert psychological warfare—played an especially brutal role in East Timor. “Kopassus troops were unquestionably the most feared, most hated and most abusive of all Indonesian units in East Timor,” says Sidney Jones of Human Rights Watch.

However, Norwich University's links with Kopassus and the most repressive elements of the Indonesian army go even deeper. The Norwich-Indonesia program was established after a 1997 trip to Jakarta by Norwich President Thomas W. Schneider and Fariborz Mukthari, an Iranian-born professor who once served in the Shah's army. There, they met with high-ranking military officials, including Major General Zacky Anwar Makarim (known as “Zacky”) and Gen. A.M. Hendropriyono. In September of that year, the two generals separately visited Norwich to inspect the training program; Hendropriyono, whose son-in-law was enrolled at the school, braved the Vermont winter for another visit in December.

Zacky, a member of Kopassus and former head of Indonesian intelligence, played a major role in the orchestrated devastation and rampant human rights abuses in East Timor. Western diplomats put Zacky's name high on the list of those under investigation for crimes against humanity. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Zacky, “probably the country's most experienced covert operative, and two other senior intelligence officers, are widely believed to have had a role in setting up the network [and] organizing the militias” in East Timor.

Tomas Gonçalves, a defector now in Macao who was a coordinator of a pro-Jakarta militia group in Dili, told the *South China Morning Post* he attended planning meetings with high military leaders in March in Jakarta and Dili. The meetings outlined a plan to depopulate East Timor once it became clear that the U.N.-organized referendum would be won by supporters of independence. Gonçalves said that the operation was run by Kopassus officers under Zacky's command.

Similarly, in September the *Times* of London reported that the Indonesian military plotted to use the militias to kill independence advocates and their families as well as to assassinate Catholic clergy and nuns. “The plan, which was coordinated by military intelligence, was under the direction of General

[Zacky],” wrote the *Times*. “While helping to turn East Timor into a wasteland, [Zacky] was liaising with the United Nations Mission in East Timor and would have had detailed access to the U.N.'s plans.” (It was during this period that Norwich were serving in East Timor “under the U.N. flag.”)

Zacky left his position in East Timor on Aug. 28, two days before the Aug. 30 vote, in which more than 78.5 percent of the population voted for independence. The militia violence that exploded after announcement of the results was initially attributed to independent, rogue elements engaged in a Somalia-type civil war. It soon became apparent, however, that the militias were largely organized and controlled by the military. In many cases, soldiers switched uniforms as needed. One man arrested by Australian troops, and identified later as a militia platoon commander, carried a picture of himself wearing the distinctive uniform of the Kopassus special forces.

The other man who visited Norwich was Hendropriyono, one of the country's “most openly ruthless officers,” in the words of Nairn. Nicknamed “The Butcher of Lampung,”



Indonesian soldiers in East Timor.

troops in Indonesia's Lampung Province under his command in 1989 opened fire on a Muslim school and massacred an estimated 100 people. A former Kopassus officer and chief of the Jakarta Military Command, Hendropriyono was minister for Transmigration and Resettlement until Sept. 27. In this capacity, he oversaw the establishment of camps and the forced resettlement of some 200,000 East Timorese refugees to various Indonesian islands.

Hendropriyono also played a key role in the formation of the country's militias. As far back as December 1998, according to the *Jakarta Post*, he promoted a plan to establish and arm civilian militias and give them their own uniforms and ranks. “Security is important,” he told reporters. “Security can only be guaranteed if people protect their own property and uphold democracy. The civilian militia would be a multipurpose organization because it could be used to handle anarchic situations and unrest.” The militias in East Timor were a separate operation, but surely drew on Hendropriyono's model.

EMMANUEL DUNAND/AFP

Schneider says he knew nothing about the background or current activities of either Zacky or Hendropiyono. But when he went to Jakarta, he was impressed by the openness of the officials he met and by the progress the Suharto regime had made. "They were intrigued that we were a private university," he says. "And the fact that a dictator would invite us was encouraging. They would have a chance to become Westernized and get their act together."

On learning that the students' bills were sent to Kopassus headquarters, Schneider commented that the information wouldn't have deterred him from accepting them. "Education is the solution to the world's problems," he says. "We would take Communist students from Red China. What better way to teach them that their system is screwed up?"

While Schneider hopes that these military-to-military contacts will spread U.S. values and deter human rights abuses, Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin is less sanguine. "I have seen no evidence in my 24 years in Congress," he recently told the *New York Times*, "of one instance, where because of American military involvement with another military, that the Americans have stopped that foreign army from carrying out atrocities against their own people."

In addition to the belief that the school can be a force for good, Norwich spokesman Thomas Greene argues that turning down the Indonesian program would amount to discrimination. "Schools should not be in the business of making arbitrary judgments, because to do so is a slippery slope," he says. While contending that Indonesian applicants have to "meet the same criteria as other students," Greene acknowledges that the only real measurement is their English language ability and that none of the candidates proposed by Indonesia was rejected.

The federal military colleges—West Point, Annapolis and the Air Force Academy—on the other hand, acting on instructions from the State and Defense departments, are "not inviting" Indonesian students to apply for the classes of 2003 and 2004. A Defense Department spokesman cites human rights concerns. On average, these academies turn down about 90 percent of foreign applicants. Schneider responds that the situations are not parallel, since Norwich is primarily an educational institution rather than specifically a military-training facility.

While Norwich is certainly not as prestigious as West Point or state schools such as The Citadel and the Virginia Military Institute, it offers several advantages to certain applicants, the first being its willingness to accept a block of students without asking too many questions. It's hard to imagine the other academies rubber stamping a group of students selected by a foreign government.

Norwich also offers relative obscurity. Who would think a general under suspicion of crimes against humanity, the head of a repressive foreign intelligence apparatus, and young men who are part of (or training to enter) an army notorious for its massacres would be strolling around the gentle village of Northfield, Vermont? "If a program this large and involved with Indonesian government

institutions had been anywhere else," Naim says. "It would have gotten more attention from Congress and perhaps would have been shut down."

It may soon get that attention. Vermont's Democratic Sen. Patrick Leahy has been particularly vociferous in condemning Indonesian repression and putting forward legislation to curtail America's facilitation of the continuing abuses. "The only U.S. government-funded training of Indonesian forces in this country is limited to a certain type of training: non-combat, human rights, management of defense resources, medical assistance, language," says Tim Rieser, Leahy's foreign policy aide. "And now it is no longer doing even that kind of training."

On Sept. 10, President Clinton effectively froze all relations with the Indonesian military, including commercial arms sales. But Norwich argues that restrictions on training are irrelevant to the school. "This isn't the U.S. army," Hansen says. "It's not a government operation. Not a federal agency."

Although private, as a tax-exempt educational institution, Norwich is in effect subsidized by federal, state and local governments. More specifically, according to its literature, the college accepts federal funds in the form of Pell grants, Federal Supplemental Education assistance, college work study programs, and Perkins, Stafford and PLUS loans. "Since Norwich receives federal funds," Rieser says, "one could argue that the U.S. government is subsidizing the training of future Indonesian soldiers."

Furthermore, Rieser says, a law sponsored by Leahy that passed in 1998 prohibits federal assistance or military training from "going to any unit of security forces if the Secretary of State has credible evidence that any member of a unit has committed gross violations of human rights." Kopassus clearly falls under that ban. And given the close relationship between the school and the Indonesian generals, the evidence that the program is funded by the military, and the fact that the home address of 11 current students is Kopassus headquarters, the Norwich program, if not strictly illegal, Rieser adds, "may be inconsistent with President Clinton's order ending cooperation with the Indonesian military." ■

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**D**espite an all-out attempt by presidential candidate Bill Bradley to make racial justice a mainstay of his campaign, the black electorate remains solidly behind Vice President Al Gore. But as Bradley's political insurgency gains momentum, the black electorate gains importance. Newly esteemed, the black community may take another look at this lanky challenger to the presumptive favorite.

Gore's connection to President Clinton is the primary reason he's popular in the black community, argues David Bositis, senior analyst at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington-based think tank that focuses on African-American issues. "Gore has Clinton's blessings and the president is still extraordinarily popular among African-Americans," he says. "As far as I can see, Bradley's not even on the radar in the black community, except in a few northern states."

But Gore's poll numbers have been falling lately and most analysts attribute this decline to the widely diagnosed ailment of "Clinton fatigue." The vice president is being tarnished by his proximity to an impeached president who has been the focus of intense national debate for several years. There is a general consensus that the voters' desire for change is troubling Gore's candidacy. This creates an acute dilemma for the vice president—touting his Clinton connections bolsters his status in the black community, but hurts him among the general electorate.

Bradley faces no such dilemma. The former New Jersey senator and New York Knicks forward has focused consistently on the need to improve race relations since his latter days in Congress, where he served from 1978 to 1996. He first gained public notice for this commitment in a 1991 speech he made on the Senate floor following the police beating of black motorist Rodney King in Los Angeles.

But such candor has done little to up Bradley's profile in most of America's black community. A recent Zogby International poll found Gore with a 71-percent to 10-percent advantage over Bradley among African-Americans. An August poll by the Joint Center found that 69 percent held a favorable opinion of Gore, while Bradley was liked by 41 percent of black adults. However, 42 percent of the respondents said they didn't know who Bradley was or what he represented. "Most black voters are in the South," Bositis notes, "and New Jersey is like a distant country."

# Bill Bradley Courts the Black Vote

By Salim Muwakkil



RICHARD B. LEVINE/NEWSMAKERS

Bill Bradley has found an unlikely ally—the Rev. Al Sharpton.

**H**owever, there are signs that the former senator from that distant country is making inroads into the black community that may transcend his regional base. What's more, Bradley has managed to reach out to the more controversial, yet most passionate, elements of the black activist community without alienating the white core of his support.

Bradley took a considerable political risk when he traveled to Harlem to speak before an audience convened by the Rev. Al Sharpton last August. Sharpton is intensely disliked among New York Jews, a politically active constituency that Bradley needs to mount a successful challenge to Gore's candidacy in the Empire State. Bradley told the audience in the Harlem church that "racial unity

is not for me a political position. It's who I am. It's what I believe. It's what I care most about. It's one of the main motivations for my being in politics in the first place."

Bradley also outlined an agenda he would pursue as president, saying he would institute policies to end discriminatory lending practices by banks, press for tax cuts specifically aimed at helping middle-class and low-income people, raise the minimum wage and push for legislation that would make it easier for workers to join labor unions. His positions don't differ drastically from Gore's repertoire of campaign promises, but the symbolism of the venue added significance to Bradley's presentation. The Harlem appearance was the first by any presidential candidate since Robert Kennedy in 1968.

## The wide range of support for Bill Bradley reveals a large reservoir of discontent with the status quo.

Not only did Bradley gain the respect of Sharpton's National Action Network—an influential coalition of black activist forces—his overall poll numbers continued to rise in New York, and he soon surpassed the vice president. Bradley later gained the endorsement of New York's retiring senator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Mark Riley, a popular talk show host on the black-owned radio station WLIB-AM, found that Bradley pulled about 65 percent of the vote in a recent listener poll. "Sure the numbers are unscientific," Riley says, "but it still was striking how Bradley's popularity has soared among our listeners."

Bradley's growing buzz is an example of how support from the most passionate elements of a movement reap dividends far beyond mere crowd size. Organizers from Sharpton's group have relayed their enthusiasm to activist colleagues in cities across the country, and suddenly Bradley is gaining the attention of a diversity of grassroots leadership. Wallace "Gator" Bradley, an African-American leader of United in Peace, the gang truce movement, says local leaders in several big cities—including Cleveland, Minneapolis, Los Angeles and Philadelphia—have jumped on the Bradley bandwagon, and there is an increasingly organized effort to marshal support for him. "I'm very attracted to Bradley's courage in speaking out about racial injustices," he says, "and his willingness to say things other politicians don't dare to say."

The reformed gang member's concerns are focused on criminal justice issues, and he sees little difference between Gore's proposals and the present administration's failed policies that have boosted the prison population to record levels. "I believe that Gore's Justice Department will be the same as Clinton's, which selectively prosecutes minority offenders. With Bradley, I see a willingness to re-examine failed policies and an openness to new ideas."

Although this support may not translate directly into votes, the Bradley campaign is gaining credibility—and visibility—with an increasingly influential segment of the community. This "street credibility" is contagious. In Chicago, for example, Bradley now is gaining strength among Latino activists. State Sen. Miguel Del Valle, one of Illinois's most progressive legislators and a well-respected Latino leader, recently announced his support for Bradley.

Aside from cultivating grassroots appeal, Bradley needs to gain endorsements from respected black politicians. Although most black Democratic officials reportedly are keeping their options open, it's an open secret that most are with Gore. The majority of the 38-member Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), for example, supports the vice president, although influential members like Maxine Waters of California, John Conyers of Michigan, John Lewis of Georgia and 15 others remain technically neutral.

The presidential preference of Illinois Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr., is of particular interest to observers of black politics. The young congressman increasingly is seen to exemplify a new, more independent spirit moving among upwardly mobile African-Americans. Jackson says he and other CBC members are holding back because they have not heard enough from both candidates about their plans to address issues important to African-Americans. "Are either of them willing to put a progressive African-American on their ticket as vice president?" Jackson asks. "That would really do something to energize the sluggish electorate."

But hard-nosed analysts like Bositis are not impressed by Bradley's symbolic inroads in Harlem. He puts more stock in what CBC chairman James E. Clyburn of South Carolina told the *Boston Globe*: "I have talked to people in the caucus who are not yet ready to make it formal. But I have not talked to anybody who tells me they do not plan to be for Gore."

Bositis says Gore's operatives have been cultivating these political allies for many months and that they are solidly entrenched. Bradley could score an upset in the early primaries in New Hampshire, California and Iowa. But once the race shifts to the South in the March 14 "Super Tuesday" elections, Gore's dominance will be overwhelming. "The South belongs to Gore, and that's the region where the primaries will be won," he insists.

Still, the wide range of support being marshaled on behalf of Bradley reveals a large reservoir of discontent with the status quo. Clinton's popularity among African-Americans always had more to do with style than substance; his charming persona diverted attention from his many questionable policies. Gore can never expect the same level of personal support.

In his Harlem speech, Bradley insisted his concern for improved race relations is not an attitude he's wearing just for the presidential campaign. His media description as an advocate for racial unity is well founded. He is a rare combination of physical grace and intellectual gravity.

Yet even in his left-leaning campaign, Bradley remains in favor of the death penalty and is a strong supporter of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization. But these breaks with the progressive catechism are not significant given his competition. Even committed progressives like Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) and Harvard Professor Cornel West are willing to give Bradley a pass on his death penalty sacrilege.

What had promised to be a snoozer of an election that offered African-Americans a choice of lesser evils between two Southern politicians with four-letter names could turn out to be a much richer affair. It's a good development. Bradley's surge has increased the currency of the black vote, and upped the ante for black support. ■



# Debt Wish

By Chris Rasmussen

There are some things money can't buy," MasterCard's current television advertisements remind us. Thankfully, "for everything else, there's MasterCard." Spending a romantic evening with your spouse, or attending a family reunion or a best friend's wedding, according to the 30-second spots created by McCann-Erickson, is "priceless." Although these ineffable moments cannot be reckoned in dollars and cents, they are accompanied by a veritable spending spree— theater tickets, airline reservations, restaurant meals, new clothes. A few weeks after the glow of these priceless experiences has subsided, their cost will be tabulated to the penny and billed at an exorbitant annual interest rate of 19.8 percent. A typical American household now carries several thousand dollars of consumer debt. Priceless moments, it seems, can be awfully pricey.

**Financing the American Dream:  
A Cultural History of  
Consumer Credit**  
By Lendol Calder  
Princeton University Press  
377 pages, \$29.95

The "American Dream" always has been a curious mixture of idealism and materialism. In *Financing the American Dream*, Lendol Calder recounts the origins of our consumer economy, in which many Americans willingly, if not eagerly, spend themselves into debt in order to enjoy the material abundance that characterizes the "American way of life." Calder, an historian at Augustana College in Rock Island, Ill., shows that consumer debt, far from a recent invention, was integral to the creation of consumer society in the early 20th century. Moreover, he argues that consumer debt is not a testament to Americans' lack of self-discipline, but rather a powerful example of their willingness to submit to the rigid discipline necessary to sustain our consumer economy. Credit shapes not only our habits as consumers, but as workers.

Because so many Americans are in debt, they are compelled to work and budget their earnings to meet their seemingly endless credit card bills and car payments, as well as their mortgages and other financial obligations. As Calder notes, the wit compressed into a bumper sticker can be telling: "I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go."

Throughout the 20th century, critics of consumer society commonly have grumbled that Americans have become almost devoid of self-discipline. These critics have pined for an imaginary, bygone era when Americans proudly cinched up their belts and went hungry, or sewed dresses from flour sacks rather than shame themselves by borrowing money. Calder debunks this wistful version of history, reminding readers that our credit economy did not first roll off the assembly line after World War II. Debtors always have been with us. Poor and working-class Americans frequently relied on credit from grocers and merchants to tide them over until the next paycheck. Farmers, for instance, lived on credit throughout the spring and summer, awaiting the fall harvest, when they hoped to settle their accounts.

In the 19th century, utilizing credit to finance business ventures was generally considered acceptable. Falling into debt to purchase consumer goods, however, was roundly condemned as a sign of profligacy. In an era devoted to the production of wealth, "consumption" was commonly equated with "waste." Upstanding middle-class Americans prided themselves on paying in cash, and despised the poor for resorting to credit to supply their household needs. Because consumer debt was considered immoral and wasteful, banks refused to extend credit for consumption. As a result, poor and working-class Americans in need of a loan were dependent on a *demimonde* of pawnbrokers and loan sharks, whose shady business practices compounded the unseemliness of consumer credit.

By the 1920s, buying on credit became more respectable as it "trickled

up" from the poor and working class to the middle class. Where their Victorian forebears had been thrifty and devoted to paying in cash, middle-class Americans now began to purchase automobiles, sewing machines, furniture, radios, phonographs and other expensive household items on the installment plan, which entailed a fixed number of monthly payments. Still, "buying on time" was subjected to widespread criticism in the '20s by economists, businessmen and moralists, who decried the rapid growth of consumer debt as economically and morally unsound. Americans had acquired brand new buying habits, but their understanding of the morality of getting and spending was a hand-me-down from the Victorian era.

Given many Americans' persistent antipathy to debt, a good deal of intellectual work was needed to legitimize the extension of consumer

**Today's credit cards  
charge interest rates  
that, throughout  
most of Western  
history, would have  
been illegal.**

credit. Calder's discussion of the pitched debates over the morality of credit reminds us that the discipline of economics, which in recent decades has become highly mathematical and market-oriented, was once infused with powerful ethical and political concerns.

In the '20s, economist E.R.A. Seligman coined the term "consumer credit" to replace the pejorative term "consumptive credit," which suggested that purchasing goods for personal use was downright wasteful. Seligman pointed out that the distinction between beneficial, "productive" economic activity and wasteful, "consumptive" behavior was specious, since production and consumption were inextricably linked. He argued persuasively that consumer spending and credit could increase, rather than undermine, American prosperity. Without credit, Americans would be forced to

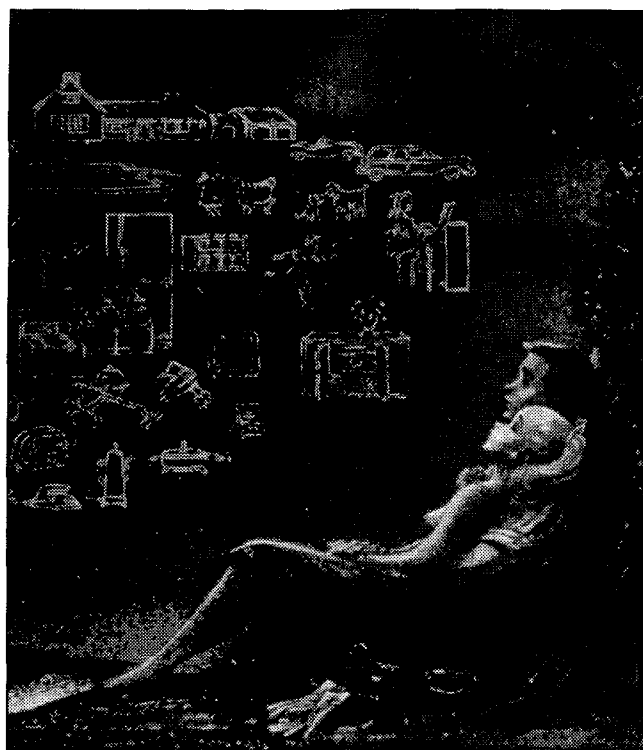
curtail their consumption of goods, factory output would decline precipitously and recession would ensue. The nation's economy, like the economy of most American households, is thus utterly dependent on credit.

By decade's end, Seligman's views (along with those of John Maynard Keynes and other economists who understood the indispensable role of consumer spending in market economies) had become widely, if not universally, accepted. When the Great Depression ravaged the economy in the '30s, economists generally attributed the downturn to "underconsumption." In response, merchants and bankers strove to revive the economy by extending true credit, which, unlike installments, did not prescribe a fixed number of payments, but allowed consumers to repay their loans, at interest, on an open-ended schedule. Over the course of a couple decades, Americans had exchanged their belief in the virtues of labor and thrift for an economy based on consumption and credit, creating the intellectual and ethical justifications for consumer society.

Calder's most controversial contention is that Americans' growing reliance upon consumer debt is not evidence of self-indulgence or "instant gratification," but precisely the opposite. By undertaking debt, we leave ourselves no option but to continue working and budgeting our earnings to meet those monthly credit card bills. As historian Jackson Lears has argued, consumer capitalism has not allowed Americans' desires for enjoyment and self-indulgence to run riot, but rather has contained them. By supplying consumers with an abundance of products and styles that provide ample diversion, our pleasure-seeking is channeled in directions that reinforce, rather than challenge, the capitalist economy. Credit enables consumers to purchase items that would otherwise be unaffordable, but also forces

them to submit to what Calder paradoxically terms "disciplined hedonism."

Calder is right to note that the "legal, institutional and moral foundations" of our economy of consumption and credit were laid early this century. But he discounts some of the ways in which contemporary consumer society is markedly different from its



antecedents. Credit is not merely the foundation of our consumer economy; it has become the very atmosphere that suffuses it. Consumer credit formerly was used to purchase necessities or expensive household items, but Americans now routinely charge even small, decidedly unnecessary purchases. (Who has not waited in line at a grocery store while the cashier processed an impecunious undergraduate's credit card purchase of \$3 worth of goods?) Credit cards, once granted only to consumers who could prove that they had sufficient means, are now "pre-approved" and offered to Americans almost every time they check the daily mail. The banks and corporations that offer these cards charge interest rates that, throughout most of Western history, would have been illegal.

Although Americans have submitted to the discipline imposed by their debts,

they seem not altogether happy with this regime. Consumer debt is no longer condemned as a sure sign of moral turpitude, but considerable apprehension remains about the economic and personal costs of consumer debt. Uneasy jokes about credit card bills and the dreaded "Christmas hangover" are a staple of American conversation. A vast industry has sprung up to counsel Americans on how to extricate themselves from the "credit trap." Financial-cum-spiritual guru Suze Orman's *The Nine Steps to Financial Freedom* has been on the bestseller list for more than a year, and her latest book, *The Courage To Be Rich*, recently topped the list. Orman, the latest in a long line of charlatans stretching from advertising executive Bruce Barton through Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale, scrambles therapy, self-help and faith into a recipe for gaining both spiritual contentment and financial riches by mastering household expenditures.

Though consumer capitalism has brought about a new form of discipline on workers and consumers, it also has loosened Americans' sense of self-discipline in other key respects. As Calder observes, consumer society is not merely geared to the production of goods, but the production of identity and meaning. In the early 20th century, the "American way of life" melded the nation's vaunted material abundance and its guarantees of liberty. As more Americans glimpsed or even participated in this burgeoning consumer culture, they began to consider some level of material abundance as part of their birthright. As consumer capitalism has become ubiquitous, many now think of themselves primarily as consumers, rather than citizens. Desires and demands, then, rather than rights and obligations, have become the governing principle for many contemporary Americans. ■

Chris Rasmussen, a Smithsonian fellow at the National Museum of American History, is completing a history of coin-operated machines.



# A Modern Inquisition

By Carl Bromley

Last May in Rome, when gunmen ambushed and killed Massimo D'Antona, a senior aide to Italy's Labor Ministry, the flame of left-wing terrorism, long thought extinguished, temporarily re-entered Italy's political limelight.

Rumors of a killing performed with "military precision" seemed to be confirmed by the discovery of a 28-page

document claiming responsibility for the assassination on behalf of the "Red Brigades for the Construction of the Fighting Communist Party." In the '70s, the Red Brigades waged a ferocious campaign of violence against the institutions of the Italian state that reached a fever pitch with the 1978 kidnap and killing of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro. The document, which featured the Brigades' distinctive five-pointed-star emblem and a prose style that mimicked the turgid vernacular of the old Brigade communiqués, recalled another Italy, the Italy of "the years of lead."

**The Judge and the Historian:  
Marginal Notes on a  
Late-Twentieth-Century  
Miscarriage of Justice**  
By Carlo Ginzburg  
Verso  
211 pages, \$22

document claiming responsibility for the assassination on behalf of the "Red Brigades for the Construction of the Fighting Communist Party." In the '70s, the Red Brigades waged a ferocious campaign of violence against the institutions of the Italian state that reached a fever pitch with the 1978 kidnap and killing of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro. The document, which featured the Brigades' distinctive five-pointed-star emblem and a prose style that mimicked the turgid vernacular of the old Brigade communiqués, recalled another Italy, the Italy of "the years of lead."

While the media conjured up feared old ghosts with headlines like "Bullets end a decade free of terror in Italy," they were just as swift to summon the service of an exorcist, in the form of repentant ex-Red Brigadist Adriana Faranda. "For me, the cycle of armed violence was absolutely over, without any chance of re-opening," she told the press. "I cannot understand how there could still be people who hope to ferment a revolutionary process in Italy. ... It is inconceivable that there should be comrades so crazy, so out of touch with time."

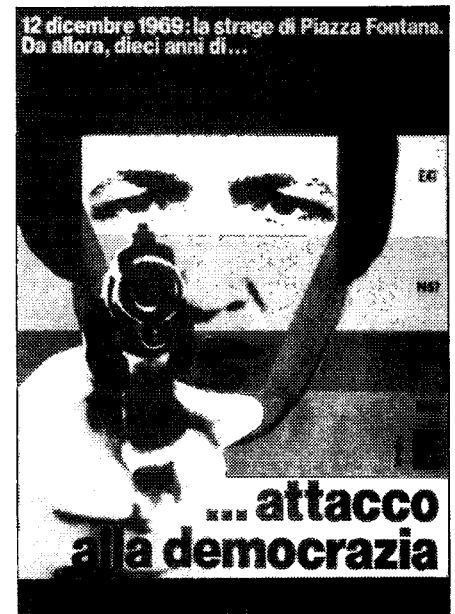
Faranda's sprinklings of holy water are revealing because their splash extends well beyond the orbit of the Red Brigades to the fading extra-parliamentary traditions of the Italian revolutionary left. "Armed violence"

becomes a synonym for the "revolutionary process," so as soon as a malignant aspect of Italy's incendiary past seemed to disrupt the continuum of the orthodox, neoliberal present, all other strains of this revolutionary tradition are conflated and henceforth banished with it. Lest we forget, the rank-and-file worker revolts that flared during 1969's "hot autumn" converged with a similarly rebellious student movement to create Europe's liveliest and most militant left-wing subculture. This whirlwind of socialist and situationist activity frightened Italian elites, and pressurized Italy's massive Communist Party, which had prided itself as the custodian of political dissent since its leading role in the resistance to fascism. But its political cautiousness had led many to believe that it had jettisoned its revolutionary heritage to become a principally reformist organization. This was reflected in its temporal ambitions: For the Italian Communists, the revolution was something in the future, subject to permanent postponement. For far-left groups like Avanguardia Operaia and Lotta Continua, the time was now.

Violence was another way the far-left differentiated itself from the Communists, but its violence was of a streetfighting kind, supplemental to the movement's wider ambitions. Naturally, like any laboratory of dissent, it contained its dogmatists and puritans. When the revolts subsided, these people filled the vacuum and formed the backbone of the Red Brigades. The group's underground structure, and the fact that violence became its *raison d'être*, differentiated it from the likes of Lotta Continua, a public group intensely suspicious of the Brigades.

Mainstream Italy dreams of sealing itself off from the political traumas of this period by invoking highly selective memories, and by portraying its leading rebel intellectuals as pariahs. Such is the case with Adriano Sofri and his comrades, the jailed former leaders of Lotta Continua, whose travails are revealed in the very welcome translation of Carlo Ginzburg's *The Judge and the*

*Historian: Marginal Notes on a Late-Twentieth-Century Miscarriage of Justice.* The international campaign to release Sofri from jail has become a *cause célèbre* in Europe, gaining the support of leading intellectuals and left-wing politicians. (Italian dramatist Dario Fo, who came of age during the "hot autumn," donated his Nobel Prize money to the campaign.)



Ginzburg's most celebrated book is *The Cheese and the Worms*, a moving tale of heresy and the Inquisition in 16th-century Italy, reconstructed from extant trial manuscripts. Transferring his meticulous historical method to the contemporary case of Sofri, Ginzburg exposes an egregious miscarriage of justice that resembles the sulphuric world of the Inquisition.

In 1988, Leonardo Marino, a former member of Lotta Continua, confessed to being an accomplice in the 1972 killing of Milanese Police Superintendent Luigi Calabresi. Calabresi had gained notoriety for his role in the suspicious death of anarchist railworker Giuseppe Pinelli, who, after being hauled in for three days of questioning following the 1969 bombing of Milan's Banca dell'Agricoltura, "fell" out of the window in Calabresi's office. (Fo wickedly lampooned the police's official version of events in his play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*.) Lotta Continua's eponymously named daily newspaper waged a furious

campaign against Calabresi, accusing him of murdering Pinelli, and Calabresi sued for libel in return. The day after Calabresi's killing, *Lotta Continua* declared, in words that would return to haunt its editor Sofri, that his murder was a "deed in which the exploited recognize their own yearning for justice."

Following Marino's confession, a preliminary judicial inquiry implicated the two leaders of *Lotta Continua*, Sofri and Giorgio Pietrostefani (whom Marino accused of giving the order for the shooting), as well as a militant from the same group, Ovidio Bompressi, in Calabresi's murder. Eventually, after seven contentious court cases in nine years, the three men each were sentenced to 22 years in prison.

Ginzburg was struck by the "impression of continuity with the past," as he waded through the thousands of pages of preliminary reports, trial transcripts and judgments that the Sofri trial generated. As in the witch and heretic trials of old, the accusation leveled by the accomplice, Marino, was funda-

mental. Rather than trying to find objective verification of Marino's confession, the magistrates in the preliminary investigation and trial used his confession as a touchstone to test eyewitness accounts—all of which varied greatly from Marino's.

## An historian known for his work on the Inquisition finds startling parallels in a murder case against three Italian radicals.

In a trial riddled with absurdity, inconsistency and falsehood, where important forensic details—like the bullet that killed Calabresi and his killer's getaway car—disappeared from the police compound soon after Sofri's arrest, the pivotal fraud is Marino's version of the events surrounding his confession. Marino told the preliminary investigation that on July 19, 1988, he entered a police station in Ameglia and declared that he was haunted by guilt. He wished to confess to a series of crimes bound up with his history as a political militant. The next day, he was taken to the Operations Command center of the Milan *carabinieri*, where transcripts of his first statements were made. The day after that, in the presence of an assistant prosecuting attorney, he confessed to taking part in the killing of Calabresi, as well as a series of other robberies between 1971 and 1987. However, two years

later during the trial, a police officer revealed, amid general astonishment, that Marino had actually entered the police barracks earlier, on July 2, 1988. In addition, Ginzburg has discovered from a July 28, 1988, press conference (that followed the arrest of Sofri) a statement from a police officer claiming Marino had declared his guilt "a few months ago," which begs the questions: How long were the *carabinieri* really interested in Marino? And what transpired during those 17 days in July 1988?

Though Ginzburg doesn't offer many suggestions of what really might have happened, he says that the existence of doubt—however small—should have led the judges to throw out the case. We can assume he believes there was something fishy about the activities of the *carabinieri* in those mysterious 17 days, and also the roles of a priest and a Communist Party senator who allegedly encouraged Marino to confess. Marino comes across as a rather pathetic creature, scraping by in a marginal existence as a bank robber and crepe seller, and clearly resentful of his former comrade Sofri, who had become a prominent public intellectual in Italy.

The quality of Marino's repentance arouses Ginzburg's greatest suspicions. He notes how Marino's confessions are filtered through a "stilted bureaucratic language," and marked by inconsistent accounts "of the remarkably slow process of his inner struggle" with his conscience. In some of his testimonies, Marino's long night of the soul begins in 1972, while in others it was much more recent.

The symbolic power of repentance in a legal culture steeped in Catholicism was Marino's asset, rescuing the trial from complete collapse. Three testimonies from police officers, all dwelling on Marino's remorse and conscience, managed to swing an initially skeptical presiding judge and re-established "the truth with the air of those who do exactly as they please." Ginzburg writes that in the judgment of the court of appeals, "standard mitigating circumstances were denied the three convicted killers because...of the complete absence of any signs of remorse, regret,



*A Prayer to Saint Maurice* by Robert Colescott. On view at G.R. N'Namdi Gallery in Chicago, from Oct. 15 to Nov. 26.



or confession on the part of the defendants." As Ginzburg shrewdly observes, "Demands for repentance, remorse, confession and abjuration, come from another sort of tribunal—those of the Inquisition."

It seems that the distance from the Inquisitorial state of the 16th century to the modern one is short. In mobilizing fears of the "diabolic rites" of the Italian far left, modern Italy apes the Inquisition's symbolic use of necromancy and heresy to police personal and public discourse and habit. And by deliberately distorting the nature of the Italian far-left by emphasizing terrorist spectacle, other more fertile forms of left political militancy are erased from the political memory bank.

For sure, the Red Brigades were a nihilistic response to the corruption of the Italian state. As one worker

observed at the time, there was already "terrorism in the factories, with fascist foremen." But the Brigades did contain a residue of that shop floor anger and class violence of what was then the most formidable, radical and creative worker movement in Western Europe. But Sofri's group, Lotta Continua, on the other hand was far more embedded in this rich, radical culture than the Red Brigades ever were, championing, as Ginzburg reminds us, "the initiative of the masses" and criticizing "the shortcuts of terrorism."

While Ginzburg's objective is to expose the errors, inconsistencies and contradictions that "spangle" Marino's version of events and the bizarre legal reasoning that privileged his account over any corroborative proof, this is dovetailed with important reflections on the nature of history and jurispru-

dence. Both professions share an interest in proof and verification, Ginzburg suggests. However, where the use of conjecture and probability is often a necessary evil and tool of the historian's trade, when judges do this the administration of justice is contaminated. The investigating magistrates in the Sofri case behaved as historians rather than judges, basing their claims on contextual circumstances and the absence of external confirmation.

It is to Ginzburg's credit that the "judicial method" of this admirable book played some role in the Aug. 26 release of Sofri and his comrades from jail. A Venice court has ordered a retrial for October. ■

Carl Bromley has written about politics and film for *The Nation*, *Cineaste* and *Counterpunch*.

## The Naked and the Dead

By Nhu T. Le

It was only a matter of time until the Vietnam War produced a writer like Tran Vu. Perhaps more than any other contemporary Vietnamese writer, Vu understands the extent to which war contains elements of pornography. War is pornographic in the way human bodies are degraded and subjected to violence; in the way they are left obscenely on the battlefield: lifeless, naked and ripped open, their innermost contents spilling out. The acts of rape and sadomasochism depicted in *The Dragon Hunt* mimic

and spent one year in a Philippines refugee camp before finally ending up in France in 1979, where he lived out the remainder of his youth in a series of state orphanages.

Given Vu's own personal experiences, it comes as no surprise that a sense of fractured history infects each of these five short stories. All the characters in *The Dragon Hunt* live in an apolitical world, isolated from any larger social context through which they could rebuild their lives. They are without exception victims of terrible circumstances over which they have no control, or even understand. Vu intensifies this feeling of alienation by eliminating plot almost altogether, and by replacing it with analyses of minute detail; details consistently endowed with a kind of visceral brutality that he invariably connects to memories of war.

In "The Backstreets of Hoi An," about a sadomasochistic affair between a young married woman, Loan, and her

lover, Lu, who narrates the bloody history of Hoi An during their erotic encounters, small gestures become pregnant with violent meaning: "Tea cascades into Loan's cup, clacking, splattering, scalding her feverish body, flowing like a river of lava through her body." And when Lu puts out a cigarette, "strangling the butt as if he were

### The Dragon Hunt

By Tran Vu  
Hyperion East  
112 pages, \$21

the effects of war not just in their violence against the human body, but in their aim of total erasure. Violent sex, for Vu's characters, is the means to oblivion, the bullet through the brain without having to die.

Born in 1962, Vu came of age during the final years of the Vietnam War. In 1978, he fled his country by boat to avoid military service in Cambodia,



RANDOLPH EVANS

crushing an animal to death with his fingers," Loan sees in this otherwise simple, straightforward gesture "the flicker of an extraordinary brutality that both attracts and repels her."

Nowhere in *The Dragon Hunt* do the main characters attempt to come to terms with the acute sense of loss and alienation they feel other than through sexualized violence. It becomes the most meaningful, if not most profound, mode of action they are capable of; the last resort for those who, socially isolated, can find no other way to remedy their rage, frustration and general awareness that their lives are broken. All sexual relations are tinged with some sense of transgression, degradation or violence, examples of which range from an illicit affair to incest, sado-masochism and the licking up of vomit as erotic foreplay.

Violent sex can become for Vu's characters at once the expression of pain and the means to wipe out that pain, if only for the intensity of a few orgasmic seconds. In the middle of witnessing a battle scene so chaotic and surreal that the enemies might very well be hallucinations, the narrator of the title story has an erection thinking about his lover's young daughter, Nu. Then he rapes her:

I pierce Nu with all my strength, body and soul. Her blood flows scarlet, the blood of the babies, the children who died in My Lai village. ... I plunge farther into Nu, all the way to the tenderest part of her. ... I want to live this war. Participate. Take part in the crime. Face up to it. Take responsibility. ... For once I want to kill someone, know the intoxication of shooting a man. ... I rape her, savagely. I pillage her childhood, kill it, degrade her mother, her father. I desecrate her youth. And I am satisfied.

All that Vu's characters pour into an act of rape—the blood of the My Lai children, Nu's innocence, a sister's refusal to bear her brother's child—is annihilated in the surge of an orgasm, producing a kind of false transcendence by destroying everything that they or their victims consider valuable. It's as if Vu wants to roll his characters in the crap of war—live up to it, take responsibility, participate in the crime—so that they, having lost their innocence, have nothing else to lose. ■

**Nhu T. Le**, a freelance writer in New Orleans, has also written for *The Nation*.

# Highway to Heaven

By Pat Aufderheide

A film festival is a funny place to get religion. But at the Toronto International Film Festival, Kevin Smith's *Dogma*, which has stirred up protest from Catholic organizations, was a surprise as a believer's prank, its pratfalls and parodies exercised upon a solid platform of faith. Even more surprising was the resonance that the theme of religious faith had in some of the festival's other strong offerings, including Agnieszka Holland's *The Third Miracle* and Istvan Szabo's *Sunshine*.

The Toronto festival, held Sept. 9 to 18, now in its twenty-fourth year, has become the most important North American film festival—where more than 300 films, many of them premieres, are shown. It's an event that rivals Cannes for the hordes of filmmakers, programmers, distributors, celebrities and film lovers who crowd the city's downtown streets and cinemas. Even in that environment, *Dogma* stuck out, irrepressible and unclassifiable. The film maintains Smith's (*Clerks*, *Mall Rats*, *Chasing Amy*) trademark fast-talking impudence, but is executed on a bigger scale than before—much bigger. It spans, in fact, heaven, hell and a lot of what's in between, especially New Jersey.

**Dogma**  
Directed by Kevin Smith

**The Third Miracle**  
Directed by Agnieszka Holland

**Sunshine**  
Directed by Istvan Szabo

As the movie opens, a couple of angels (the tested team of Ben Affleck and Matt Damon), who have long been banished to Wisconsin and are very sick of cheese jokes, think they've figured out a way to get back into heaven. What they haven't quite grasped, though, is that if they con their way back they'll have put one over on God. Since the world rests on the fact

of God's omnipotence, this would destroy the universe.

Enter free will, in the shape of Linda Fiorentino as Bethany. A doubting Catholic, she is not supported in her crisis of faith by her experiences as a doctor in an abortion clinic. A raspy-voiced, irascible seraph (Alan Rickman) briefs her and teams her up with a band of allies—youthful prophets Jay (Smith's childhood buddy Jason Mewes, familiar from *Clerks*) and Silent Bob (Smith himself); a muse (Salma Hayek); and an apostle (Chris Rock). Their adventures put them face to face with a monster arising from the toilet and some of Lucifer's best and brightest. Those adventures involve, among other things, a throwing-off-the-train sequence, a blow-away-the-bartender scene and mass slaughter at a press conference.

As they careen through their adventures in their cartoonish way, the characters manhandle classic controversies: Was Jesus black? Is the Bible gender-biased? Why do bad things happen to good people? Where do free choice, duty and belief meet? Does God really exist? Smith surrounds the hapless humans with supernatural creatures who have lots of answers for them. The angels and devils also have a fascination with humans that mixes contempt, awe and envy. After all the hijinks are over, the message that lingers is that God loves human beings who choose to love God. That's pretty traditional, even if the way Smith gets there isn't.

In a different emotional universe is *The Third Miracle*, the latest film by Agnieszka Holland, a world-class director of meaty character dramas. Holland, whose mentor was the magisterial Andrzej Wajda, began her career in the tempestuous era of Solidarity in Poland, when fundamental questions of morality and faith were enacted on the surface of daily life. Since then, she has succeeded in a field strewn with failure—international art film production—with such movies as her *To Kill a Priest* (1988), *Europa Europa* (1990), *The Secret Garden* (1993) and *Washington Square* (1997).



*The Third Miracle*, scheduled for release in December, is a film of dignity and grace, based on a novel by Richard Vetere. Ed Harris plays Father Frank, a priest living uneasily with his crisis of faith, assigned to investigate a potential saint. He is disgusted by the vulgarities of church politics and haunted by his role in shattering others' beliefs in a previous investigation. He is surrounded by the petty and large cruelties of poverty, as he chases down a girl supposedly cured by the saint's statue. An abused child turned drugged-out prostitute, the girl tells him about praying to the statue. "And so you prayed for her to cure you, and she did?" he asks urgently, seeking proof of faith at long last. "No," she says. "I prayed to die."

His struggles with belief are heightened when he finds himself attracted to the dead woman's daughter Roxane (Anne Heche). Roxane hates the idea



An attempt to put one over on God.

of her mother's canonization; she sees her through the eyes of a child abandoned at age 16 for the church. The crackle in the scenes between Harris and Heche keeps the emotional stakes up in a mystery that continues to unfold.

*Sunshine*, by contrast, occurs on a broad, spectacular landscape, where religious faith becomes a pawn in some of the ugliest 20th century history. Istvan Szabo, a grand old director (he won an

Oscar in 1981 for *Mephisto* and a Cannes award for his 1985 *Colonel Redl*), took on the story of three generations of a Hungarian Jewish family. In each generation, the dominant son (all played with panache by Ralph Fiennes) further loosens the family's ties to its religion, culture and identity, and dedicates his allegiance to the national project. But at each point, that nationalist loyalty is brutally betrayed. In the face of tragedy and horror, the losses mount. When the last son comes home from a Communist prison, he says to his grandmother: "If there is no God and never was, why do we miss him so much?" *Sunshine* dramatizes the perils of political loyalties and the romance of power, and takes the triteness out of what's-it-all-about questions like that. At the 8:30 a.m. screening in Toronto, my row was full of press and industry people who had come only to visit, but stayed the entire three hours. ■

DARREN MICHAELS

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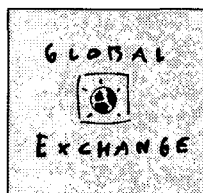
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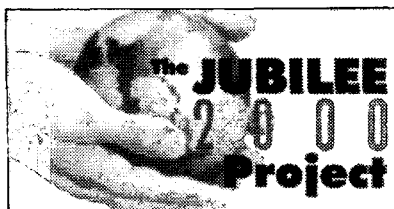
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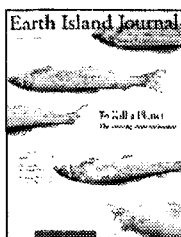


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*Continued on page 28*

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Continued from page 30

career and the political economics that accompanied it. In the process, he yields a crisp little piece of instant history that, at times, veers toward the polemic. LaFeber manages to contextualize Jordan's enormous international fame in the technologies and strategies that created the international business powerhouses Jordan endorses. And in the end, he manages a book that is less about Michael Jordan the man than about the American global industry and communications empire that made him.

LaFeber starts with three humble beginnings: In the early 1890s, James Naismith, a teacher at Springfield College in Massachusetts, is charged with

inventing an indoor game to keep young men out of trouble in the winter months between football and baseball seasons. He nails

peach baskets to the school's gymnasium bal-

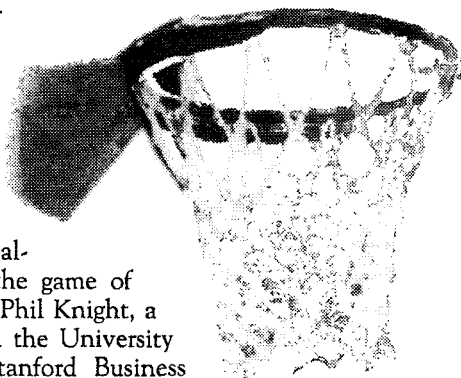
conies, and invents the game of Basket Ball. In 1963, Phil Knight, a mediocre runner from the University of Oregon and a Stanford Business School graduate, starts importing run-

ning shoes from Japan and peddling them at regional track meets. Before long, he begins making his own shoes and builds a company around them. He calls it Nike. And, finally, in his sophomore year of high school, Michael Jordan is cut from the varsity basketball team. He is deflated, but not for long. During the next year, he grows suddenly to 6'3" and puts himself through rigorous athletic drills. His basketball career takes off.

By the time Jordan became a star at the University of North Carolina, took the team to an NCAA championship, and moved on to the pros, basketball had grown into a major American sport, and Nike had gone international. Nike signed Jordan to its stable of endorsers in 1984, his rookie year with the Chicago Bulls. A few years later, the NBA hired David Stern as its new commissioner. Comparing the basketball league to Disney, Stern set out to establish what one observer called a "manifest destiny regime" to make basketball the world's sport and the NBA, by extension, the world's league. With the help of Jordan's explosive play, Nike's advertising dollars and modern telecommunications, Stern succeeded.

By the early '90s, satellite and cable television brought American programming to nearly 150 nations around the globe, and where there was American television, there was basketball, Michael Jordan, Nike and a growing host of international business concerns. Jordan was getting advertising offers from Yugoslavia; Nike opened a megastore in Shanghai; and Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch were duking it out for control of the international airwaves.

The world had changed. The 1995 NBA playoffs were broadcast in 175 countries and two dozen languages. American travelers came back from remote corners of the world with stories about villagers who were scared of cameras but eager for information about Michael Jordan.



There were snags, however. Nike's production practices—particularly in its Indonesian and Vietnamese factories—were coming under increasingly harsh scrutiny in the American press. Westerners learned that Nike paid its 25,000 Indonesian workers an average of \$2.23 a day, forced them to work 14-hour shifts and employed managers who beat and sexually harassed workers as a matter of course. Jordan, lips sealed on Nike labor conditions, just as they were when America's inner cities witnessed a rash of shootings over Air Jordans, was getting ready for retirement. And Nike, apparently, had overexpanded: In 1996, its sales receipts dipped. In 1997 and 1998, they plunged.

By now, we can be confident that these setbacks were of no grave consequence. The shot clock may be ticking on Jordan's run as an endorser, but when Brandi Chastain ripped off her jersey to celebrate America's World Cup victory in women's soccer and revealed her swoosh-embazoned sports bra, it became clear that Nike was done mourning him. And even in the face of all the college protests, code of conduct agreements and independent investigations, Nike's production practices aren't likely to change dramatically anytime soon, even if the company does manage to cough up a couple extra bucks every day for its workers and remove the most deadly carcinogens from its factories.

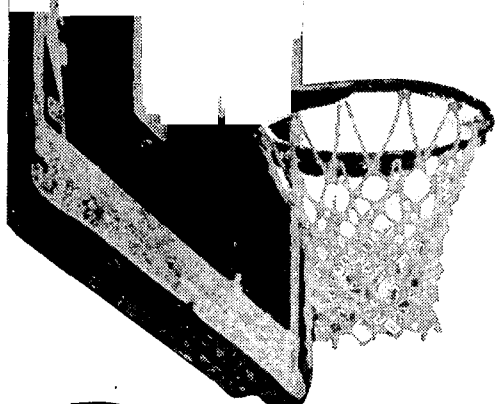
This bugs LaFeber: less because he minds sweatshops and Nike per se than because he despairs of the cultural and technological globalism that made them possible. At this point LaFeber gets dodgy: He makes no attempt to hide a fascination with Jordan that borders on idolatry (not that anyone would fault him for it), but he's clearly uncomfortable with the cultural and economic juggernaut that Jordan has become. But the one thing that *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism* makes clear is that it is fruitless to try to separate Jordan from globalism. Stuck in that paradox, LaFeber pivots, drives and trips on the way to the rim. The book, unfortunately, ends with a thud.

Still, LaFeber has insights to share: Capital is what matters, not the celebrities it makes, the CEOs who manipulate it, or even the products it sells. And in its new form, capital is more powerful than ever. LaFeber argues—not surprisingly—that in coming years capital's new form will continually bump up against cultures that are unwilling to adjust to it. And, he says—again, not so shocking—"capital will ultimately win this new contest, just as it has broken down political, economic, social and geographical barriers since its appearance in a recognizable modern form five hundred years ago." The only question that remains is whether capital's victory will be humanity's.

LaFeber seems to argue that Michael Jordan already has been King of the World, to the extent our world has kings. However, the world, or at least LaFeber's corner of it, isn't sure whether it likes King Jordan. But we are stuck with capitalism, and capitalism crowned King Jordan.

This brings us back to the meeting between Bill Bradley and the Chicago Bulls in the Senate chamber. Bradley thought he saw a political powerhouse in the making. What he actually saw was something far more powerful—the embodiment of capital. ■

Thurston Domina is a writer in New York.



# Basket Case

## MJ and globalization

By Thurston Domina

**W**hen the Chicago Bulls visited former Sen. Bill Bradley on the floor of the Senate chamber, the one-time New York Knick explained "the process of legislation and how it related to basketball" to the world championship team. As Bradley remembers the moment, in the introduction to his basketball memoir, *Life on the Run*, "Michael Jordan, leaning up against the majority leader's desk, looked so comfortable there that I wondered whether someday ... he would take the plunge into politics."

Bradley probably was projecting: He had taken the plunge, and he figured that Jordan, somebody he liked and respected, wanted to do so as well. For a host of reasons, this was off base: Bradley and Jordan don't have a great deal in common. Sure, both men played basketball professionally, but Jordan was famous for flying over opponents, while Bradley himself admits that "with my limited jumping ability I'm not much on the dunk." Jordan grew up black in the North Carolina of the '60s and '70s; Bradley was the son of a white banker in Crystal City, Mo. Jordan attended recently integrated high schools, and was trained by his mother to ignore the racism he encountered; Alex, the African-American man who helped Bradley's parents around the house for 50 years, raised young Bill's first basketball hoop for him. Jordan skipped his senior year at the University of North Carolina to enter into the NBA draft; Bradley spent two years as a Rhodes Scholar in Oxford after graduating from Princeton, taking a break from basketball and wondering whether professional play was for him.

The differences go on: Jordan is a masterful endorser—at his peak he made \$30 million a year for dribbling a basketball and \$100 million a year for hawking Nike shoes, McDonald's hamburgers, Hollywood movies and Hanes underwear. Bradley, on the other hand, earnestly refused product endorsements during his basketball career, worrying that he was desirable just for being a white face in an increasingly black game and deciding, "I wanted no part of an advertising industry which created socially useless personal needs and then sold a product to meet those needs."

Most importantly, however, Bradley wants to be the next President of the United States. It's tough to imagine Jordan wanting such an inconsequential job. Michael Jordan is the man whose name could be heard echoing out of the dormitories of Beijing University during the NBA's 1998 championship series. He's the basketball star who beat the Martian oppressors in *Space Jam* to save Bugs Bunny and the Looney Tunes crew from extraterrestrial enslavement. He's the guy sociologist and cultural critic Harry Edwards calls "the epitome of human potential, creativity and spirit." After all that, Michael Jordan, President of the United States of America sounds a little anti-climactic. Michael Jordan, King of the World would be more like it.

**W**alter LaFeber's new book, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*, begins with the innocent thought that it is an exceedingly odd thing that Jordan, a nice enough guy who could play basketball like no other, ought to end up a shoo-in candidate for global kingship. LaFeber, whose earlier works are considerably drier academic treatises on diplomatic history, looks for explanation in Jordan's

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